

West Sussex Financial Policy and Guidance 2020

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Purpose

This policy and guidance sets out the West Sussex County Council financial offer to Children Looked After, Care Leavers and Foster Carers to ensure;

- Financial and care needs are met appropriately.
- Fairness and transparency when determining and reviewing financial eligibility and entitlement
- Consistent and equitable allocation of resources to Looked After Children and Care Leavers for whom the service has a responsibility.

The overall aim of this document is to assist practitioners and managers in their work with Looked After Children and Care Leavers to achieve the above. A separate policy and guidance for Section 17 relating Children in Need can be found on tri x where all local policies, procedures and practice guidance now is stored – [click here](#).

This policy should be linked to, and used alongside other West Sussex County Council policies and practice guidance including;

- Practice Standards Timeliness [click here](#)
- Top tips for audits [click here](#)

Legislative Framework

This document is been informed by;

- Leaving Care Act 2000
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- (National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011)
- Fostering Services Regulations 2011
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations and Guidance 2010 (revised 2015)

- Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers, Regulations and Guidance 2010 (revised 2015) – Staying Put section
- Fostering Regulations 2013
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017

This policy and guidance also links to and informs other West Sussex County Council Documents including;

- Children Looked After and Care Leavers Strategic Framework - draft
- Leaving Care Local Offer - draft
- The Promise 2020 - draft

Principles / Approach and Support – All ages

1. All allowances and support should be based on an assessment of need and be set out in the Childs Placement Plan or Pathway Plan. The Plan must also highlight any attached conditions, how payments will be made, the frequency of payments, when they will be reviewed and when they will cease.
2. It is a requirement that allowances are reviewed annually and are aligned with current welfare benefit rates.
3. Looked after children and care leavers who are also unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are entitled to the same allowances as any other looked after child or care leaver. However, allowances to this group of young people may be affected and limited as a result of their immigration status.
4. Wherever possible, VAT should be reclaimed on all purchases (that are VAT rated). A VAT receipt is required for all purchases made with a purchase card. When purchasing with all other payment methods a receipt with a VAT number is required for items up to £250.00 and a full VAT receipt is required for items over £250.00.

Principles / Approach and Support – Age 16+

1. The allowances contained in section one of the Finance Policy apply to young people aged 16 & 17 who are looked after and/or deemed Eligible and Relevant and who are living in semi-independent placements and independent accommodation which is not registered under the Care Standards Act 2000 and therefore not inspected by Ofsted. The allowances contained in section two and three apply to all Former Relevant Children and the allowances in section four apply to all Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant Children.
2. Depending on an assessment of need, Qualifying Children may be entitled to the same level of support as Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant Children.
3. Certain groups of children looked after and care leavers aged 16 & 17 are eligible to claim welfare benefits (lone parents and sick and disabled young people). Where young people are eligible to claim, support should be provided to maximise their benefit income (Universal Credit). Where young people aged 16 & 17 are in receipt of welfare benefits, a number of the leaving care allowances cease.
4. The allowances set out in the following sections apply to all young people who are deemed Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant and are dependent on an assessment of need and their legal and immigration status. All allowances can also be applied to Qualifying Children, subject to a full assessment of their circumstances and needs.

Financial Guidance

Purchasing methods

Please note, funding can only be administered to a young person/ family through the processes detailed below. All one-off payments must be allocated via the following processes:

- Prepaid cards
- Payment Requisition
- Travel Portal
- P-Card (Corporate Credit Cards)
- One Way to Buy
- Postal Orders

For payments in relation to ongoing costs please follow the Flowchart relating to Payments via an Invoice or Invoice Plan.

N.B. Social Workers / Personal Advisors must not make payments to young people/ families and claim costs back through the expenses system.

The attached diagram outlines the various payment methods that can be used depending on the type of support required. Where a client/carer has their own bank account this should be selected in preference to a prepaid card.



Flow Chart.xlsx

For further detailed information of how the prepaid card process works, please follow this link:

[The Prepaid Card Process](#)

Approval Levels / Delegated Financial Powers

OWTB's list of Certifying Officers show responsibility for day-to day budget management, listing those who can approve expenditure against specific cost centres and compliment the general financial delegation given in the Scheme of Delegation (SoD).

- Each payment should have the agreement of an authorising officer and the approval of a certifying officer.
- All of the following should be considered by the social worker / personal advisor when making a request for payment:
 - Is the payment legal and within these Departmental Guidelines?
 - Which payment method is the safest/most appropriate?
 - Is it the most economical option?
 - Is the budget the correct one to use?
 - To agree that the assistance is valid and is the correct approach for meeting the customer's needs.
 - To confirm that there is money available in the budget.

Role of the Certifying Officer

- To provide advice on any of the above-mentioned considerations.

- To confirm that all appropriate considerations have been made.
- Provide an element of consistency across the Service Group and because of this can often make suggestions based on good ideas used in other teams.

Delegated Powers – Financial Limits

	per Family per Year
Social Worker Personal Advisor	Up to £50
Practice Manager Principal Manager	Up to £1000 per family per year
Group Manager Team Manager (EH)	Up to £5,000 per family per year
Service Leader	Up to £30,000 per family per year. Any spend over this would need to be agreed at the Access to Resource Panel

Coding and reporting of expenditure

Subjective coding – General Ledger (GL) codes

The GL code to be used is determined by the type of expenditure that is being incurred, which forms a critical part of the ability to report and monitor levels of expenditure, to better understand trends and changes in demand in specific areas over time. **Please see [Appendix 4](#) for relevant GL codes.**

Where an invoice or invoice plan is the method of payment, a proclass code is required at the point of raising an order with a supplier. These are mapped to GL codes and are also detailed in the table included at the end of this policy.

Objective coding – cost centre/budget codes

Please ensure that you use the correct cost centre when purchasing goods or services, and that this has been agreed by the relevant budget holder.

Team	Cost Centre
Children Looked After	South – JF34 North – JF31
FSP	Bognor – JN02 Worthing – JN03 Horsham – JN04
Fostering (In-house)	https://www.fosteringhandbook.com/westsussex/
Residential (In-house)	High Trees - JW23 Orchard House - JW22 Teasel Close - JW17 May House - JW24 Seaside - JW13 Cissbury Lodge - JW21
Leaving Care Service;	Staffing plus – EF34 Uni/HE – EF23 Hardship – EF33 UASC – JB30 Setting Up Home Allowance – EC21

Section 1 – Children Looked After (0 – 16 years)

Pocket Money

Pocket money should be a stated amount of money and the young person should be aware of this amount and be allowed to use this in whatever way they choose, with appropriate adult support and guidance. Supervision should be given to younger children and they should be encouraged to discuss how their money is being spent and to understand basic budgeting skills and about making choices whilst experiencing money handling at a very young age. Older children should be encouraged to start taking more responsibility for budgeting, which could include buying their own mobile phone top ups, paying for personal toiletries or funding activities. Saving for a larger item or trip could become part of the child's care plan and saving could be targeted for this purpose. As the young person starts to move towards independence then they could be encouraged to be purchasing goods for this purpose too. Discussions about pocket money should include the child's social worker and foster carer.

- Pocket money should be paid at the rate agreed at the Placement Planning meeting and the child encouraged to have a money box or other receptacle where they can save their money safely in the short term. Any excess money or additional funds should be paid into their bank/savings account. The child or young person should be encouraged to participate in the running of this account as age/understanding appropriate.
- Pocket money should be reviewed regularly and discussions to consider any changes should include the foster carers, child and their social worker.
- Once the child/young person receives a personal allowance, there are likely to be expectations on them to fund personal items. This would be agreed in Placement Planning meetings and care should be taken to ensure that the child is not being encouraged to enter a lifestyle which would be unaffordable in future. Additional money could be put into savings to avoid this situation.
- If a child moves to a new placement then the money should move with them to their new foster carers.

The current suggested weekly amounts for pocket money are as follows:

Age of child	Suggested pocket money per week
5	£2.00
6	£2.50
7	£3.00
8	£3.50
9	£4.00
10	£4.50
11	£5.00
12	£6.00
13	£7.50
14	£10.00
15	£12.50
16	£13.00

Savings

All children coming into local authority care should have a savings account set up no later than 2 months from arrival.

Child Trust Funds

If you were born between 1 September 2002 and 2 January 2011, you might have a Child Trust Fund. This is a long-term savings account for a child.

If you have a Child Trust Fund, visit GOV.UK to find out more.

Junior Individual Savings Accounts (ISA)

If you've been in care for over a year and you don't have a Child Trust Fund, the government will automatically set up a Junior ISA for you and put £200 in it. Any money we've saved for you will also go into this account.

If you have a Junior ISA, visit GOV.UK to find out more.

The £200 paid in by the government to Junior ISAs cannot be accessed until the young person reaches the age of 18 but the registered keeper or person with Parental Responsibility can manage the account only until the child reaches 16. It is recommended that savings for the child could be put directly into these existing accounts.

It is desirable that a child/young person in long term care will have both a savings account as above and an additional bank account to support independent money management.

Savings in excess of £6,000 in the young person's personal accounts may affect their ability to access benefits. Financial advice should be sought for vulnerable young people, single parents and disabled children, as they are young people who may become eligible for welfare benefits at age 16 years.

Travel Costs

As a rule, the travel of the children looked after, especially for education, leisure activities, medical appointments, assessment appointments and contact should be provided by the placement provider. Only in exceptional circumstances the transport arrangements should be arranged and funded by allocated team in Children's Services.

Clothing

Clothing allowance will be paid through the child's placement.

Birthdays

It is important to recognise that birthdays are an important milestone that as corporate parents we should celebrate with the young person. As such, Social Workers can purchase a £10 voucher.

Education and Training Equipment

[Please see virtual school section 4](#)

Children's Belongings

Children belongings should always move with the children at the time of the change of placement. If this cannot take place, it should be within 72 hours. Children's belongings should be packed and transported appropriately.

National Insurance Numbers

By the age of 16 all young people (with some exceptions for UASC) should have a National Insurance Number and relevant identity documents with photographic evidence to ensure they can register for housing, bank accounts and claim welfare benefits.

All young people should automatically receive a National Insurance Number at the age of 15 and 9 months. The National Insurance Number is sent to the address where Child Benefit is being claimed for the young person. As most children looked after do not have a Child Benefit claim, National Insurance Numbers do not automatically get issued. At the age of 15 and 9 months the social worker for the young person needs to contact the New Registrations Section of the National Insurance Number Office – HMRC.

For detailed guidance see: <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/manuals/nimmanual/NIM39310.htm>

Where a young person is claiming Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or a Personal Independence Payment (PIP), their National Insurance Number is used as their claim reference number.

Section 2 – West Sussex County Council Foster Carers

All policies, procedure and guidance for the fostering service can be found in the foster carers handbook:
<https://www.fosteringhandbook.com/westsussex/>



Financial%20Support
 %20in%20Adoption.2)

Adoption allowances are set out in a separate policy. (

All Inclusive Allowance Background

Foster Carer payments are made up of 2 parts;

- The All-Inclusive Allowance (AIA) - designed to meet all the normal expenses incurred in caring for a foster child. Also included are additional costs incurred by the foster family by having another child in the family home.
- The Skills fee (previously known as the Household Fee) is a reward fee payable in recognition of skills and knowledge demonstrated by the foster carer.

What is included in the AIA?

The allowance is designed to include the direct costs of caring for an individual child. The AIA has been calculated to meet all regular weekly expenses.

A non-exhaustive list includes:

- ✓ clothing, food, books, newspapers and other reading materials, nappies, bottles
- ✓ playgroup and play scheme fees
- ✓ pocket money
- ✓ entertainment, hobbies, clubs, recreational activities, sports clothing and equipment and musical equipment
- ✓ transport (including public transport) to school, contact and other activities
- ✓ school activities and trips
- ✓ family holidays
- ✓ photographs (including school photographs)
- ✓ passports
- ✓ computers
- ✓ contact lenses and glasses
- ✓ mobile phone contracts/top ups
- ✓ hairdressing
- ✓ other routine 'one off' expenses

Pocket Money

A guide to the amount of pocket money to be given can be found in Appendix 2. Consideration should be given to the amount given to the foster carer's birth children as it would be unfair if foster children receive more or less than the foster carer's own children. The amount should be agreed (and recorded on Mosaic by the SSW) at the placement planning meeting, reviewed at CLA reviews and increased at each birthday. Pocket money should be used towards a child or young person's personal needs ranging from magazines, excess mobile phone charges for young people (although capped phone contracts are recommended) or perhaps as a contribution towards a birth family's birthday present. The child or young person should also be encouraged to save some of their pocket money. Pocket money should only be withheld as a last resort and the money either placed in a savings account or carried over until the next week.

Foster Carers are strongly encouraged to make savings for their foster child / children. Savings should be paid into the child's CTF or Junior ISA account on a regular basis, e.g. once a month. Foster carers should have permission to manage this account as the "registered contact" in agreement with the child's social worker and the child, if age/understanding appropriate.

As young people are able to take more responsibility for managing their own money, discussions should take place between the young person and the foster carer about how much money is given to the young person and what they should be providing for themselves out of this money and agreed by all parties.

Birthday and Festival allowances

- The festival allowance is paid to help with the extra expense of Christmas/Festival. This includes not just buying presents for the foster children but presents they may wish to give (e.g. to friends or birth family) and celebrations and outings.
- The birthday allowance helps towards the cost of presents for the child and also celebrations and outings.
- Foster carers should be able to provide a brief record of how the allowances were spent for their supervising social worker.
- The festival allowance will be paid on the payment run covering the period which includes the 1st December. Normally it is expected that the child will be in placement on the 25th December to be eligible for the festival allowance. If a child leaves a placement in December unexpectedly, a request for reimbursement can be made to EPP for any presents purchased.
- The supervising social worker should email the Payments Team (FS.Childcare.Payments@westsussex.gov.uk) if the festival payment is to be paid to celebrate a festival at another time of the year i.e. for Eid.
- The birthday allowance is paid on the fortnightly payment run before which the birthday falls.
- The birthday allowance for an 18th birthday is one week's allowance less £50. The £50 is paid direct to the young person by their allocated Social Worker.

Day Care, short breaks and respite care

- If pre-agreed day care is provided, the foster carers should complete and email a day care claim form to their supervising social worker for processing.
- There are additional costs associated with caring for children with disabilities which foster carers can claim. These costs must be agreed at the initial planning meeting with the child disability team.
- If an overnight respite/short break placement is provided, a respite claim form should be completed by the foster carer and emailed to their supervising social worker for processing. Respite carer's with placements of 6 nights or less can claim mileage in full for collecting and dropping back to main placement. Claims cannot be made for activities etc. during respite.
- For stays of three nights or less a disturbance fee is payable. (See Appendix 1 for details)
- When a respite foster carer stays in the main foster carer's home, payment will be made as per the absence rulings for the main carer and the respite carer will be paid a pro-rata rate. No disturbance fee will be paid in these instances.

Equipment

There is an expectation that foster carers will supply all usual furniture and equipment to care for the children for their preferential approved age group. However, a request can be made to EPP for essential equipment needed if a foster carer accepts a child outside of this age range or to meet the costs of exceptional or unusual equipment. Specialist items, such as those for a child with disabilities should also be referred to EPP.

Replacement costs of equipment will usually be met from the AIA although costs incurred by exceptional wear and tear and damage may be referred to the EPP if the cost cannot be claimed from the foster carer's household insurance. Similarly, theft of household or personal items should normally be claimed from the foster carer's household insurance although when this is unsuccessful the loss should be referred to the EPP or to the Authority's insurer (depending on circumstances) by the supervising social worker.

Retainers and Absences

A schedule of payments below has been agreed to cater for absences from the foster placement. Any exceptions, extended payments or retainers require approval from EPP.

The details summarised below indicate the percentage paid and the maximum periods for the following circumstances;
Hospital (Child), School Trips/Other Trips (Scouts/Guides/Clubs etcetera), AWOL/Detention

- **Length of Absence:** Up to 2 weeks (14 nights)
- **All Inclusive Allowance:** 100%
- **Skills Fee:** 100%

- **Length of Absence:** Over 14 nights
- **All Inclusive Allowance:** Nil
- **Skills Fee:** Nil

The details summarised below indicate the percentage paid and the maximum periods for the following circumstances;
Shared Care (with parents, Grandparents etc.) Primary Carer – Foster Carer, Respite (Primary Carer), Respite taken place in Primary Carer’s Home

- **Length of Absence:** Up to 6 nights:
- **All Inclusive Allowance:** 100%
- **Skills Fee:** 100%

- **Length of Absence:** 7 nights – 14 nights
- **All Inclusive Allowance:** Nil
- **Skills Fee:** 100%

- **Length of Absence:** Over 14 nights
- **All Inclusive Allowance:** Nil
- **Skills Fee:** Nil

The details summarised below indicate the percentage paid and the maximum periods in the circumstance of a **School Boarder**

- **Length of Absence:** Length of School Term/nights absent from placement
- **All Inclusive Allowance:** 50%
- **Skills Fee:** 50%

The details summarised below indicate the percentage paid and the maximum periods in the circumstance of **Carer illness/operation or family bereavement**

- **Length of Absence:** Up to 2 weeks (14 nights) in a twelve-month period. (NB Child must return to the placement).
- **All Inclusive Allowance:** 100%
- **Skills Fee:** 100%

The details summarised below indicate the percentage paid and the maximum periods in the circumstance of a **Carer’s Holiday**

- **Length of Absence:** Any Length
- **All Inclusive Allowance:** Nil
- **Skills Fee:** Nil

The details summarised below indicate the percentage paid and the maximum periods in the circumstance of; **Home on Trial, Reserving A Placement**

- **Length of Absence:** Up to 2 weeks (14 nights)
- **All Inclusive Allowance:** 30%

- **Skills Fee: 100%**

Retainers for Advanced Foster Carers (level 3 & 4)

- Retainers are payable to Advanced foster carers (levels 3 & 4) who have signed an exclusivity agreement as part of their partnership with the Authority. This retainer procedure does not supersede the absence and retainer financial procedures (detailed above), which are applicable to foster carers of all levels.
- A retainer of 100% of skills fee is payable for up to 13 weeks from the date when no child is in placement and when the carer is available, within the conditions described in this procedure and the Foster Care Partnership Agreement.
- In addition to the above, one retainer of 30% of the AIA is payable for up to 13 weeks at the AIA rate for the last eldest child in placement.
- The maximum time a retainer can be paid is 13 weeks for the skills fee and the AIA in any 52 weeks. This is the cumulative total in any 52-week period and does not relate to a particular calendar year. Payment for part of a week will be made on a pro-rata basis.
- If a foster carer refuses a placement that can be judged to meet the needs of the child and is consistent with their approval and skills and accreditation level, their retainer will not be paid or, if already being paid, will be withdrawn.
- The supervising social worker is responsible for monitoring requests and refusals of placements. Decisions as to the viability of placement, arrangements for support or a decision not to make a placement must be evidenced to the Group Manager to support the payment of a retainer when placements have been considered.
- Foster carers must complete retainer claim forms detailing their vacancy position during the period. The forms must be sent to their supervising social worker for processing and authorisation. Payments will be made fortnightly in arrears.
- Foster carers will not be eligible for a retainer in any period when they are not available for placement, without the approval of the Exceptional Payments Panel.

Suspension Retainers

If a foster carer is suspended from fostering because of an allegation of ill-treatment of a child or concerns about the standard of care they are providing, a retainer of 30% AIA of the eldest child last in placement and their skills fee at the one child rate is payable with immediate effect after suspension. This is paid for a maximum period of 13 weeks. Should the matter take longer than this to bring to a resolution (either by the carer being reinstated or by the foster carer's registration being withdrawn) an application may be made to the EPP for an extension to the payment.

Single child placement fee (Young People with Complex Needs)

An additional allowance will be paid when it is necessary for a child/young person to be the only child in placement or when the number of children a carer can look after must be reduced to or maintained below the number of children for which the carer has approval **and** when one (or more) of the following conditions are met:

- The child/young person is placed in a West Sussex residential unit
- The child/young person is placed with an independent fostering agency or an agency residential unit
- The child/young person is placed in a secure residential establishment
- The child/young person's needs are identified as complex and consequently may have an impact on subsequent placement or the required amount of input from the carers to meet the child's needs is deemed as inappropriate to make further placement.

The payment will be for one placement at 30% of the AIA level of the child in placement. The EPP will agree and set a time scale for review, in the first instance this will be a maximum of six months. In the event of the placement being a respite care arrangement in support of the above circumstances, the formula will apply on a pro-rata basis at the 30% level.

Section 2a – Staying Put

Staying Put

Once a young person reaches their 18th birthday, they are no longer looked after and therefore foster carer allowances and children looked after allowances no longer apply.

As such, and to assist with preparing for independence, young people are expected to take responsibility for some parts of the allowance foster carers previously provided. The changes take place five weeks after the young person's 18th birthday, acknowledging that there will be a period of transition whilst a young person receives earnings from employment, income support, jobseekers' allowance and universal credit.

Further information on West Sussex Staying Put procedures can be found here;

https://www.proceduresonline.com/westsussex/cs/p_stay_put.html

Section 2b – Independent Fostering Agencies and Residential Homes

Independent providers currently work to a range of different guidelines. Allowances for children are calculated in a range of ways, however there are some key elements which are broadly in line across the board.

Some providers do not specify the level of allowances and leave it to the discretion of carers as to the individual needs of the child. Others have some set areas – e.g. pocket money/savings – but beyond that there is more discretion to the carers. This is not found in residential placements, where allowances tend to be more fixed.

Pocket Money

Pocket money varies by age in almost every provision, and in within the range of £5-£10 per week. Some are as low as £1, but these would be for very young children. £15 pw is the maximum pocket money – and applies to most placements over 15.

Savings

Most providers save a minimum of £5p.w. per child, with some as high as £10. These savings are sometimes held centrally by the providers, and sometimes by the home, or foster carers. The occasions on which these can be accessed are dependent on the individual circumstances.

Clothing

Clothing allowances are generally around £60 per month – although they do vary between £50 and £90p.m.

Birthday and Festival Allowances

These are usually in the order of £150 for presents to cover each occasion – sometimes supplemented by an allowance for an activity or meal out as part of the celebration.

Additional Allowances

Toiletries/personal care are generally consistent – at around £5 per week.

Some providers include an allowance for phones – usually around £5per week.

Another significant expense in placements is a holiday. There tends not to be a fixed allowance for this, although some providers do give an allowance towards a holiday – e.g. £500. We have a contractual expectation that the children do have a holiday each year. Residential units will tend to do this collectively, and the costs are within the overall fee for the placement, rather than a specific amount.

Reward Schemes

Reward schemes are particularly found in residential homes. These can result in additional allowances of around £10 per week.

Section 3 – Residential

- Children and young people should be supported to develop money management and financial capability skills and be given as much control of their finances as possible, taking account of their age, vulnerability, ability and capacity;
- Individual placement plans should set out the allowances that are to be provided, the arrangements for transferring/providing the allowance to the child/young person and any conditions attached to the provision or use of the allowance.

- All children and young people aged 16 and above should have a placement plan and pathway plan that is focussed on supporting a positive financial transition from care to supported living and independence;
- In circumstances where it can be demonstrated that an allowance is being mis-used and is increasing the risks to the child/young person, the placement plan should set out the arrangements for managing/providing the allowance in an alternative and more supervised manner.

All children living in WSCC Children’s Homes on a full-time basis are entitled to receive weekly pocket money, and other allowances for clothing, toiletries and special occasions such as birthdays and Christmas/Festivals. Please refer to the table below for a breakdown of these additional allowances.

Pocket Money ([see also section 1](#))

The amount of pocket money depends on the age of the child and is in line with government guidance, which is reviewed every year.

The current suggested weekly amounts for pocket money are as follows:

Age of child	Suggested pocket money per week
5	£2.00
6	£2.50
7	£3.00
8	£3.50
9	£4.00
10	£4.50
11	£5.00
12	£6.00
13	£7.50
14	£10.00
15	£12.50
16	£13.00
17	£13.50
18	£14.00

Recording of Pocket Money

Each home has service-specific in-house arrangements for recording and auditing the balance of pocket money for each young person. Please refer to these individual guidance documents for more information. The following principles must be followed:

Staff entering pocket money onto the young person’s financial record must date and sign it. Young people taking out pocket money must also date and sign it. The remaining balance must be entered by staff.

Birthday, Christmas and Religious Festival Allowances

All children are entitled to a yearly birthday gift allowance of £75.00 (up to and including the 18th birthday). The child's keyworker should purchase a gift/gifts to the value of £75.00. In exceptional circumstances the allowance can be provided as a gift card/voucher. How the birthday allowance will be used should be set out in the child's placement plan.

Christmas / religious festival allowance is £100. The child's keyworker should purchase a gift/gifts to the value of £100.

Children / young people who are non-Christians should be given a choice as to when their festival allowance is to be provided. If they do not have a preference, the allowance should be made available at Christmas to ensure that they receive their entitlement alongside their peers.

Additional Allowances

Children are entitled to the following allowances:

Allowance	Amount	Frequency
Toiletries	£20	1 st of every month
Haircuts	£25	Alternate months (6 times per year)
Mobile Phone / iPad costs	£10	Per month
Clothing allowance	£70	1 st of every month
School/college/work clothing	£250	Once per academic year
Bedding	£150	Once per year
Towels	£60	Once per year
Birthday Allowance	£75	Once per year
Xmas/Festival allowance	£100	Once per year

- Staff must consider any specialist requirements for children and young people and discuss and agree any changes with the young person and their allocated social worker.
- Children / young people are provided with a monthly clothing allowance;
 - The use of the allowance will differ between individuals and should be set out in the child / young person's placement plan and agreed by the residential keyworker. The placement plan should set out how the allowance will be provided and managed and how this will change over time from the items being purchased for the child to the young person choosing and purchasing their own clothing.
 - Residential staff should keep a record of all items purchased to demonstrate how the allowance has been used and what items of clothing the child / young person has.
- Children will be encouraged to manage their own finances and will be given as much freedom as possible (considering their age and understanding) in making decisions about spending their own money.
- All looked after young people will be encouraged to save money, in line with their age and understanding. Staff will support young people to open bank and savings accounts and encourage the development of budgeting skills ([see reference to savings – Section 1](#))
- Staff should assist and support children in their decision making and in helping them to develop the knowledge and skills to manage their finances successfully.
- Children need to learn budgeting skills and need to be assisted in using appropriate financial organisations such as banks, building societies and government savings schemes.

- Children's money is to be kept safe. Young people should be offered the facilities of storing their money in individual named containers in a lockable safe or secure cupboard/cabinet.
- If a child/young person had been admitted to hospital procedural pocket money should still be provided whilst the child remains on the home's register.

Budgets available to all Children's Homes

There are additional funds available to all WSCC children's homes for the following areas of expenditure:

- Travel
- Holidays
- Outings
- Recreation/leisure activities
- Opticians costs (as needed)
- Placement stability costs (to maintain current placements if difficulties arise)
- Home learning (for teaching materials where children are not currently attending school/college)
- School trips
- Passports (each child will be supported to obtain a passport as needed)
- Lunch money (as needed)

Individual Children's Homes

Registered Managers of individual children's homes will have discretion on how to allocate funds depending on the needs of children in their care. Our ethos and practice are all centred on a commitment that no child will be financially disadvantaged because they are Looked After by the local authority.

Section 4 – Virtual School

The Virtual School has a statutory responsibility to promote the education of children and young people in the care of the local authority. They monitor attendance, progress and outcomes as if all of the children are in one school and work with other professional such as teachers and social workers to ensure that children in care are able to achieve -

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683556/Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683556/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_children_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf)

The Virtual School is responsible for the pupil premium plus budget. This funding is given to the virtual school head to improve and enhance the educational outcomes and experiences of children in their care. To access support from the Virtual School, costed targets must be set through the PEP demonstrating how the funding will be used to improve outcomes for the young person.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2020-to-2021/pupil-premium-conditions-of-grant-2020-to-2021>

All young people are expected to remain in education, employment or training until they are 18 and throughout this time, they continue to use the PEPs to monitor progress and identify areas where support is needed. The Virtual School does not receive funding to support our post 16 young people however, we do endeavour to meet requests for support where are all possible.

Young people and care leavers aged between 16 and 19 are eligible to apply for a bursary through their college or school. The bursary for vulnerable groups can pay up to £1,200 per year to a student participating on a study program that lasts for 30 weeks or more. Students on study programs of less than 30 weeks should be paid a pro-rata amount.

The school or college will have a published policy on how to access the bursary, the appropriate use of the funding and how it will be paid – these will be individual for each school.

The link to the post 16 bursary guidance is here <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2020-to-2021-academic-year>

Section 5 – Care Leavers and Young People (16 – 25)

Who can receive a service?

There are some important distinctions to who can receive a service.

The key terms are: **Eligible**, **Relevant**, **Former Relevant** and **Qualifying**. These describe young people aged between 16 and 25 and to distinguish the levels of support that will be offered.

<p>Eligible Care Leaver</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are aged 16 or 17; and • Are currently a child or young person in care; and • Have been cared for a period of 13 weeks (or periods amounting to 13 weeks) which began after • Reached 14 and must include at least one day whilst they were 16 or 17 years old. 	<p>Children's Services must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen to wishes and feelings Appoint a personal adviser Assess needs Prepare a care plan and a Pathway Plan Review a Care Plan and Pathway Plan Pay for accommodation Make sure financial needs are met
<p>Relevant Care Leaver</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are no longer being cared for by the Local Authority but have been 'eligible'; and • Are currently 16 or 17 years old. 	<p>Children's Services must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen to wishes and feelings Appoint a personal adviser Assess needs Prepare a Pathway Plan Review Pathway Plan Find somewhere suitable to live Pay for accommodation Make sure financial needs are met Keep in touch Visit regularly
<p>Former Relevant Care Leaver</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aged between 18 and 21 OR between 18 and 25 if still in full-time education or requested support up until they turn 25 • Previously an eligible child and/or a relevant child 	<p>For a care leaver who is a Former Relevant Child Children's Services must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen to wishes and feelings Provide a personal adviser Review Pathway Plan Help with expenses connected with work, education or training Provide or pay for accommodation during college or university holidays if studying away from home Provide other support by buying the items needed directly or, in exceptional circumstances, by giving cash, to the extent that welfare and education needs require it Contribute towards living expenses near to employment, education or training Give you a £2,000 bursary if in higher education Keep in touch

	<p>Visit regularly</p> <p>Children's Services may:</p> <p>Consider contributing to post-graduate courses Assist in identifying financial support and resources to enable the young person to undertake post graduate study The young person is expected to claim benefits or apply for a student loan as any other young person.</p> <p>Children's Services must offer support and advice until 25 but there is no set age for this support to end. What matters is what has been agreed in the Pathway Plan. It is possible to continue support by Children's Service when 25 or older if it is part of your Pathway Plan that the young person is completing an educational course or training.</p>
<p>Qualifying Care Leaver</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are at least 16 but under 21; and • Were a cared for young person prior to the making of a special guardianship order which was in force when they reached 18; or • If at any time after they reached the age of 16, were still a cared for child, were no longer looked after or fostered; or • Were privately fostered and assessed to be in need. 	<p>Children's Services must:</p> <p>Give advice and support Keep in touch Provide or pay for accommodation during college or university holidays if studying full-time away from home, up to the age of 25.</p> <p>Children's Services may:</p> <p>Find somewhere to live in exceptional circumstances Provide support by buying the items needed directly or, in exceptional circumstances, by giving cash, to the extent that welfare and education needs require it. Give a grant to pay for expenses related to education, training and work needs up to the age of 25. Contribute to living expenses related with education and training, up to the age of 25.</p>

What services are available?

As a brief overview, young people who are eligible, relevant or former relevant can expect the following:

- Personal Advisor or Social Worker
- Pathway Plan
- General advice and assistance

Other entitlements are set out in the Care Leavers Offer ([Link to document when completed](#))

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) fall into the same categories as above with the added dependence of the status of their claim for asylum – that is their Right to Remain in the UK. The Home Office is responsible for deciding on the outcome of a child or young person's asylum claim.

Many children and young people claiming asylum are not awarded refugee status (less than 20%) or the equivalent Humanitarian Protection status (1%) but are given Discretionary Leave to Remain (DLR).

DLR is given for a period of 30 months in the first instance (or in the case of young people who are the victims of trafficking 12 months) or until the age of 17 ½, whichever is the sooner.

If they make a claim for further leave to remain before the current period expires, they will be allowed to remain for a further period, beyond the age of 18.

Children's Social Care should therefore make sure the young person makes their application for extension of DLR in time, if no application is made, they will be treated the same as any other overstayer. If they fail to apply for asylum prior to 18 they are to be treated the same as any other 18 plus asylum seeker, guidance can be found in section 54 and schedule 3 paragraph 2 of the NIAA 2002.

West Sussex will support young people to appeal a decision for a refused asylum claim if their legal representative advises there is more than a 50% chance of this being achieved, therefore securing legal aid funding to support this challenge.

5.1 Children Looked After and those deemed Eligible and Relevant (Aged 16 and 17) who are living in semi-independent and independent placements.

- Section 31 'Care Orders' – Eligible children (and those who have not been looked after for 13 weeks)
- Section 20 'Accommodated' – Eligible children (and those who have not been looked after for 13 weeks)
- Young people previously looked after – Relevant children

Accommodation and Placements

16+ accommodation and support services are safe and appropriate placements that are outcome driven and provide YP with every opportunity to leave care successfully. The principles and areas of focus designed to maximise these opportunities are;

- The arrangements and planning for young people leaving care is everybody's responsibility
- Services are part of the local community and link in with community partners who are also included in the planning, housing, DWP, health, private sector landlords, local education/training/employment providers, community safety teams, police
- Young people participate in their support planning, aims and objectives, safety planning, service development, inspections and monitoring, staff training
- Services have an established programme of independence for young people to prepare them for full independence
- Support staff have the required skills and knowledge to maximise opportunities and keep young people safe
- Accommodation is of a good standard and compliant with Health and Safety legislation

16+ services are inspected by WSCC and monitored quarterly.

Placement and accommodation costs to be met in full for young people up to the age of 18.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people and / or young people without recourse to public funds

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking young people living in supported accommodation and independent accommodation will receive funding from WSCC as for all other care leavers.

UASC who have been granted asylum, are waiting for the outcome of their claim for asylum, or have made an appeal for a decision of a refused asylum claim will receive funding as for all other care leavers and WSCC will receive a grant from The Home Office that contributes towards this cost.

Those UASC who have not been granted asylum have NRPF and will receive funding from WSCC as for all other care leavers. WSCC does not receive a grant from The Home Office towards this cost.

Setting Up Home Allowance

Available to 16 and 17 years in exceptional circumstances – [see section 5.2](#)

Personal Allowance (£58.90 per week)

This is provided to young people who are studying, undertaking unpaid training, looking for employment, or taking part in voluntary work. Young people who are undertaking paid training will get the equivalent or a higher allowance from their training provider.

Young people who are undertaking low paid employment will continue to receive the Personal Allowance until they earn the following amounts:

- When a young person has a net income of £125.00 net or more per week, his/her personal allowance will be reduced by 50%.
- When a young person has a net income of £145.00 net or more per week, his/her personal allowance and clothing allowance will cease (note this level is set so reduction apply to 16/17-year olds who are working full time on minimum wage)

The £58.90 set out by the government for a single person to live on includes the cost of their utilities. Young people in 16+ placements are not expected to contribute towards utilities or any other costs relating the running of the property.

This allowance is provided up to the age of 18 and should be paid via BACS. If the young person does not have a bank account, payment can be made onto a Pre-Paid Card, depending on an assessment of need and the requirements and circumstances of individual young people.

Sick and disabled young people and lone parents (aged 16 & 17) are able to claim means tested benefits and therefore they do not receive the majority of the 16 & 17-year-old leaving care allowances as their welfare benefits are provided to cover these areas.

The Provision of Allowances

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and related DWP guidance on benefit entitlement highlights that care leavers aged 16 and 17 living independently should be no worse off when provided with leaving care allowances than they were when they were entitled to means tested benefits. Therefore 16- & 17-year olds should be provided with a minimum allowance of £58.90 per week (basic UC rate, expressed as weekly figure which is provided to cover all of their needs.

Clothing Allowance

£800 will be paid in 4 instalments of £200 throughout the year at age 16 and 17.

The arrangements for providing and spending the clothing allowance should be set out in the young person's pathway plan.

Savings

Child Trust Funds

If you were born between 1 September 2002 and 2 January 2011, you might have a Child Trust Fund. This is a long-term savings account for a child.

If you have a Child Trust Fund, visit GOV.UK to find out more.

Looked After Children (LAC) Junior ISA

As a Looked After child, and then as a care leaver, you'll be able to access The Junior ISA – [click here for further detail](#).

The **Junior ISA** is set up by the Share Foundation on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE). When it's set up, £200.00 is put in it by the government and, over time, that amount grows a little. At the age of 18, the young person can request for some or all the money to be paid to them. However, the ISA will only be available if the following criteria apply:

- a. Must have been born *before* 1st September 2002 or *after* 2nd January 2011.
- b. Must have been in care for at least 12 months uninterrupted.
- c. Must be under the age of 18 (on application).

Debt

If a young person finds themselves getting into debt, the SW / PA will help contact companies they owe money to and arrange a repayment plan that is affordable. Alternatively, they will introduce them to a debt advice service for help.

Financial Support for Young People who have children

The Leaving Care Service is not responsible for the financial support of Care Leavers children. However, we do want to assist our Care Leavers to provide the best possible start in life for their children.

Where a young person is working or attending education, they may be able to get support for childcare and the social worker / Personal Adviser should support them with accessing these benefits / entitlements. Former Relevant young people will be entitled to claim Income Support eleven weeks prior to the due date of the child and for a Sure Start Maternity Grant if not employed.

For new parents they may be able to access a Sure Start Maternity Grant to purchase items such as a pram, cot and other essential equipment. Further details about the grant can be found by [clicking here](#).

Young people will also be entitled to claim Child Benefit for their children and may also qualify for tax credits. The Personal Adviser must assist the young person to explore what they may be entitled to.

Where all other options have been exhausted, the Leaving Care Service may provide financial assistance from its 'hardship' budget at the discretion of the Group Manager.

Lone Parents Entitled to Welfare Benefits

Transfer to Benefits from the Birth of their Baby.

Due to having an entitlement to welfare benefits and when the lone parent is in receipt of benefits (Universal Credit & Child Benefit) the Personal Allowance, Clothing Allowance and Leisure Allowance will cease. All other allowances remain.

See Benefits Guidance –

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits>

<https://www.benefitsguide.co.uk/>

Sick or Disabled Young People Entitled to Welfare Benefits

Transfer to welfare benefits at age 16 or when entitlement to Employment and Support Allowance/Universal Credit commences.

Due to having an entitlement to welfare benefits and when the young person is in receipt of the benefits, the Personal Allowance will cease. All other allowances remain.

See Benefits Guidance –

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits>

<https://www.benefitsguide.co.uk/>

Young People Detained / in custody in YOI, STC, SCH or in Hospital

Different types of Secure Estate (YOI) provision have pocket money and clothing allowance remuneration schemes linked to engagement in education, training or positive activities. The provision of personal allowances should not create a disincentive for a young person to engage in such activities. At the point of remand or sentencing (custody) the

placement planning meeting/planning meeting/review should set out what allowances will be provided by the institution and if these will be topped up by Children's Services to the levels above. Where no remuneration scheme exists (remanded or sentenced), the allowances will be provided by Children's Services. How the allowances are provided and in what form, should be based on an assessment of need, the rules of the institution and a risk assessment of the young person's situation.

On being sentenced allowances continue for Eligible and Relevant Children subject to the remuneration issues above. On being sentenced allowances only continue for Qualifying Children subject to an assessment of need, their parental situation, as well as the remuneration issues set out above.

Young people who are detained in an NHS provision, or contracted out NHS service provision will be provided with the above allowances based on an assessment of need and risk, how these are provided should be set out in the individual placement plan and pathway plan.

Where family members are in receipt of welfare benefits prison visits and contact can be facilitate by the 'Assisted Prison Visits Scheme' allowances provided by the DWP. Travel costs for family members not in receipt of welfare benefits may be provided following an assessment of need and an assessment of the frequency.

Young People Placed with Parents / Living with Parents

Looked after children (Eligible) placed at home under placement with parent regulations and care leavers (Relevant) living at home.

If the young person is engaged in education or training and was living with the parent prior to the age of 16, the parent may be eligible to claim or reclaim Child Benefit and, in some cases, Tax Credits or add the young person to their Universal Credit claim.

If the young person returned to a parent after the age of 16, remains looked after, is not engaged in education or training, the parent is unlikely to be able to claim Child Benefit or Tax Credits/Universal Credit and the young person is unlikely to be eligible to claim benefits in their own right, in which case leaving care financial funding will apply.

For Detail See [Appendix 3](#)

Birthdays

It is important to recognise that birthdays are an important milestone that as corporate parents we should celebrate with the young person. As such, Social Workers can purchase a £50 voucher.

Each Find It Out Centre has a supply of birthday and celebration cards which can be used for Social Workers / Personal Advisers to give to young people. Personal Advisers should also 'go the extra mile' to recognize other key events and points of celebration and recognize this by sending a greetings card.

The birthday allowance will only be paid to young people who remain in active contact with their social worker or leaving care personal adviser and are engaged in the pathway planning process.

Young people living in Foster Care or a Children’s Residential Unit will receive a birthday allowance from that setting.

Christmas / Festivals

One festival allowance per year (including Christmas) to be paid with £50 voucher.

The festival allowance will only be paid to young people who remain in active contact with their social worker or leaving care personal adviser and are engaged in the pathway planning process.

Young people who are non-Christians will be given a choice as to when their festival allowance is to be provided. If they do not have a preference, the allowance should be made available at Christmas to ensure that they receive their entitlement.

Young people living in Foster Care or a Children’s Residential Unit will receive a Christmas/festival allowance from that setting.

Travel and Contact Costs

Travel costs associated with accessing education or employment may be funded by Children’s Services in the following circumstances;

- To enable the young person to visit family members (for under 18s)
- To maintain contact visits with children / dependents
- To attend court appearances
- To attend UASC legal proceedings / hearings
- To meet with solicitors or barristers in relation to legal proceedings

In some circumstances it may be appropriate for a young person to travel to appointments in a private car with a friend or relative. In exceptional circumstances this travel can be reimbursed at a rate of 20 pence per mile. **Children Services will not pay for taxis / mini cabs except in exceptional circumstance to be agreed with a Team manager.**

Key Documents

Children’s Services has a responsibility to ensure that a young person in supported accommodation has all their required key documents, e.g. passport and birth certificate.

Travel documents based on assessment of need and only where the young person is travelling immanently and do not have a passport from their country of origin;

Funding for British Citizenship Applications will be paid.

Exceptional Needs and Discretionary Payments (all areas are dependent on an assessment of need)

Emotional Wellbeing

Young people under the age of 18 can be referred to the Child and Adolescent Mental health Service Children Looked after Team or the Youth Emotional Health Service (YES). For those over 18, this team may be able to offer consultation

to the personal adviser but not direct work, Young people requesting direct therapeutic support would need to be referred to Adult mental health services through their GP.

There is a dedicated PMHW who is part of the Children's Asylum Team to support the emotional wellbeing of our UASC. This is particularly relevant as this group of young people have suffered separation from their family and asylum related trauma which may manifest as PTSD and sleep disorders.

Health

Young people may need financial support for their health needs. In the first instance young people should be supported to budget for these and use their own income / access grants and free entitlements where possible.

Care leavers under the age of 19 and in full time education will generally be exempt from most NHS charges. For others they may be able to claim assistance via the NHS Low Income Scheme by completing forms HC1 (SC) and HC1. Further details are available by [clicking here](#).

Lone parents and sick and disabled young people in receipt of Universal credit will be exempt from NHS prescription charges, dental charges and sight tests by virtue of their specific benefit claims.

It is recognised that in some instances there will be a need to be discussed with the individual and assessed by the Social Worker / Personal Advisor. Areas where financial support may be needed are: -

- Dental Work
- Glasses / Opticians payments
- Costs for travel to attend medical or therapeutic appointments
- Ante Natal Care

Religious Needs

Children's Services may assist young people to access services aimed at meeting their religious needs depending on an assessment of need – this would be based on an assessment of need.

Lone Parents

£3.10 per week healthy start voucher – from 10 weeks into the pregnancy. <https://www.gov.uk/healthy-start>

16 & 17 year old looked after (and care leavers) young women are not able to access benefits (Universal Credit) in advance of the birth of the baby, unless they can show they have limited capacity for work due to ill-health, and therefore will need essential items prior to the birth – maternity clothing, feeding equipment, bedding etc, dependent on an assessment of need.

Corporate Parent Payment

May include gift for new baby, flowers and clothing for family bereavement, terminal illness etc, a payment or cost normally met by a family member – based on individual assessment of need.

Education, Training, Apprenticeships and Employment.

Education and Training

Young people who are undertaking full time education courses or unpaid training courses receive the Personal Allowance. Young people who are undertaking an education course or training activity will receive the Leaving Care Maintenance Allowance. Additionally, young people who are undertaking full time education courses or unpaid training courses

(minimum 12 hours study/training and contact time) are eligible for the 16-19 bursary Further details about the bursary scheme can be found by [clicking here](#)

The bursary is £1200 but is dependent on attendance and is administered and paid by the Student Bursary Support Service. It does not come from the Local Authority and does not form part of the SUHA.

The SBSS may require proof from the Personal Adviser that the young person is a care leaver and entitled to leaving care support. There is a standard letter which can be tailored from information on the young person's Mosaic record to reflect the correct legal definitions. The letter can be found on SharePoint by [clicking here](#).

Up to age 19, all young people, including UASC, must use their college bursary for travel to their education provider. If the cost based on 39 weeks attendance exceeds the bursary, TM's can approve funding for the difference based on the cheapest mode of transport and after any reduction for season tickets/railcards has been researched. The LCS may assist with fees and travel fares until the bursary is paid.

The young person may also require other items to support their access to Further Education. This could be (but is not limited to): -

- College / Exam fees and registration
- Textbooks, laptop and software specified as essential;
- Activities essential to meet course requirements;
- Transport to open days and interviews;
- Specific clothing, including clothes for interview and essential equipment relating to the course

In these instances, the Personal Advisor should support the young people to approach the college to access funding where available.

For young people with children, they may be able to access financial support for childcare from the government free childcare places or from the care to learn scheme. Further details can be found on the gov.uk website by [Clicking Here](#). Applications for care to learn 2015/16 are also made on the Student Bursary Support Service as detailed above.

Childcare costs for those in receipt of Universal Credit (up to 85%) should be met through the Universal Credit childcare scheme.

Education, Training and Employment Related Support

Children's Services may provide equipment and travel costs for education or training courses and employment opportunities of the young person's choice depending on an assessment of need. Where appropriate, Children's Services will consider funding extra tuition.

Funding may be provided for subsequent education or training courses and/or for changed courses depending on an assessment of need and the young person demonstrating a commitment to continuing education or training and consistent attendance.

If special equipment is required for a traineeship/apprenticeship the provider should be approached in the first instance. If equipment is not provided, and depending on an assessment of need, it will be provided by Children's Services.

Young people who are undertaking full time further or higher education courses are entitled to a grant to assist with:
Stationery, educational visits, books and equipment, Computer and I.T. equipment, interview clothing, commencing work clothing/equipment – based on evidenced need.

Stationery, Educational Visits Grant, Books and Equipment Grant and I.T. Grant Equipment of up to £500 available through SUHA.

Children's Services will purchase equipment and/or clothing to assist the young person with their chosen employment e.g. interview clothes, overalls, protective clothing, depending on an assessment of need. This is provided as a one off.

Childcare Costs

Childcare costs should be accessed through the Care to Learn Scheme <https://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn>

Depending on circumstances, lone parents and young people with SEND may be exempt from the requirement to be currently undertaking an education, training or employment (and having completed at least 3 months). Consideration of eligibility and funding of SEND young people should be presented to the Virtual School.

5.2 Care Leavers - Former Relevant Children

- Care Leavers Aged 18 to 21, or until the completion of the education course being undertaken on their 21st birthday - Former Relevant Children
- Care Leavers Aged 21 to 25 who return to the authority to resume or commence education or training - Former Relevant Children
- Care Leavers Aged 21 to 25 who return to the authority to resume a service - Former Relevant Children

Accommodation and Placements

WSCC have no statutory duty to provide accommodation for young people over the age of 18, with the exceptions of;

- Vacation accommodation whilst studying at University, if staying away from home.
- Those with no recourse to public funds.

Accommodation costs for young people aged 18 and older will only be provided in exceptional circumstances. Placements and accommodation costs for exceptionally vulnerable young people aged 18 and older may be funded in part or full following an assessment of need and the case being considered by the Leaving Care Service Lead and Fostering and Adoption.

1. See Staying Put policy – young people living in foster care who meet the Staying Put criteria can remain in their placement.
2. Supported Lodgings placements are available to all care leavers aged 18 to 21.
3. Asylum Seekers (all rights exhausted) with no recourse to public funds will continue to be provided with accommodation up to the age of 21, or they finish their approved Education course.

In exceptional circumstances the Leaving Care Service may act as a guarantor for young people following an assessment of need and all other possible guarantors being explored and ruled out. Prior to agreeing to act as a guarantor, the scope of what is being covered by the guarantor needs to be fully identified and authorised, i.e. a) rent b) damages etc, and what are the limits to any liability. In principle, Leaving Care Services would be acting as a guarantor for the rent. The Personal Advisor should negotiate that the liability and responsibility for the condition and the cost of the accommodation should be transferred to the young person after the initial period of tenancy has expired. Where necessary Leaving Care Services will pay for the new tenancy agreement.

When young people move into privately rented accommodation their personal adviser should take pictures on their phone or portable device that show the condition of the property and any items that are included in the rent/inventory. The pictures should be sent to the young person and landlord and stored on Mosaic. This will assist with negotiating with the landlord if there are problems regarding the condition of the property and the return of the deposit when the young person leaves the property. The young person should also be encouraged to do the same.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people and / or young people without recourse to public funds

If unable to access benefits and housing and unable to legally work, we will make the following provision:

- **Weekly subsistence payments to be paid directly into bank account by BACS** to be used for food, drink, toiletries, clothing and other essentials.

The **provision of a prepaid card** to be used in place if you do not have a bank account

- **Support with travel payments for getting to college can be provided if this is not covered by the 16 – 19 bursary.**

The support with money is conditional, which means we can stop paying if the young person fails to comply with a Removal Order. If an application for extended leave is refused or appeal against refusal is dismissed, we will continue to support young people until their 21st birthday or approved education course ends.

For the subsistence payments to continue, the young person must stay in contact with the service. This decision in line with the **Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 – Schedule 3**.

We are unable to pay higher education / university tuition fees. If immigration status allows an individual to be in higher education, they will need to source funding for this by way of a scholarship or other charitable means. Tuition fees will be at the International Student rate.

Deposit and Rent in Advance

Where young people are moving into private accommodation a deposit and rent in advance will be considered if the rent level falls within the given Local Housing Allowance rate for that area – this will be dependent on a needs assessment and authorisation from a Leaving Care Service Group Manager.

Personal Advisers should check if a 'Rent Deposit Scheme' exists in the area the young person is aiming to live and/or what 'Rent Deposit Protect Scheme' the letting agent/landlord uses.

In circumstances where the Leaving Care Service is providing the deposit, or is providing a bond guarantee, the deposit/bond guarantee should be in the name of West Sussex County Council.

Many local authority housing departments operate Deposit Guarantee Schemes that offers landlords a legally binding deposit bond in place of a cash deposit.

From April 2007, landlords and agents have, by law, had to sign up to one of three Government-backed schemes when they take a deposit. These schemes aim to ensure that letting agents, landlords and tenants have access to independent deposit protection.

From 1st April 2019 the Tenant Fees Act 2019 came into force on the 1st June 2019 and as result tenancy deposits are capped, and most fees charged in connection with a tenancy are banned.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tenant-fees-act-2019-guidance>

Private sector landlords are required to provide a copy of the 'How to Rent' Leaflet to all tenants.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-rent>

Council Tax

WSCC will pay Council Tax up until the age of 22, anywhere in the Country. This payment does not happen automatically, so young people must speak to the PA to request payments.

Setting Up Home Allowance (Total £2800)

£2000 of this goes towards setting up home as this is regarded as the most challenging area for young people.

£500 is allocated to educational / employment costs

£300 is allocated toward health-related costs

Total £2800

Young people can access the Setting Up Home Allowance between the ages of 16 and 25 when they move to semi-independent or independent accommodation. Where a young person moves to semi-independent accommodation it is recommended that a proportion of the allowance is used and when they move to independent accommodation the remainder can be used.

Most young people access the SUHA when they are offered housing at age 18 or above. However, many also want to make purchases before their final move when they are in semi-independent accommodation, particularly, for example, their first TV.

The Allowance can be used to pay for damages and deposits (where other schemes are not available) in order to support y/p to progress to secure stable accommodation.

This grant should be spent in stages and ideally the bulk of it will be spent when the young person moves to their first independent, stable accommodation. The items that are pre-approved can be found in [appendix 2](#) and include things like furniture and white goods, contents insurance, TV and the first year's TV license.

If a young person needs support to move belongings to a new home, the Personal Adviser should consider the options most suitable. The Leaving Care Service have two 'man with a van' providers already set up on the 'One way to buy' system.

Young people should be supported by the Personal Adviser to furnish their home and it may be cost effective to apply to charities selling good quality second-hand goods and reliable and reputable second-hand stores. Young people will also need support in setting up utilities, whether these are by payment cards, direct debit or quarterly. Young people should be supported to make appropriate choices dependent on income and capability.

An individual record of the amount of SUHA spent / paid will be kept. There is a standard template for this purpose, which is shown in [appendix 3](#) and can be downloaded from SharePoint. Each time there is a spend against SUHA, this record should be downloaded, updated and then re-uploaded to Mosaic.

Personal Advisers must ensure a SUHA record is present when a young person is handed over to them from social workers in Children's Social Care.

The young person should be supported to use their SUHA as needed and as detailed in the pathway plan. However, the total amount available of £2800 is a maximum available to support the move to independence as well as help with health and education costs. Any unused portion will not be given to the young person and ordinarily will not be available to them once they are closed to the service. Upon closure, they will be sent a copy of their un-used balance (specifying which parts are health and education) and details of how to contact the LCS in future.

However, access to SUHA could continue post 21 if agreed with a team manager and the young person is re-opened under 'extended duties' responsibilities and included in the Pathway Plan. If this is the case, the young person should either be supported by the personal adviser if they remain open to the service or by the young person contacting the Leaving Care Helpline. All access to SUHA ends at 25 years and the young person will be advised about this in their closure letter. There is no additional funding for extended duties so funding would only be agreed if the young person has enough funds remaining in their SUHA.

Initial Benefit Claim

Personal Allowance is provided to young people aged 18 and above during the five-week initial benefit claim period and to asylum seeking young people with no recourse to public funds. [This is a loan in other areas and a payment in West Sussex?](#)

Personal allowance is paid at £77.90 (Inc. £20 covid uplift) per week.

The allowance should only be paid following checking the progress of the young person's Universal Credit claim with the DWP and on the basis that the young person does not take up a Universal Credit Advance. Young people making their initial claim for Universal Credit will have to wait for around 5 weeks for their first payment (a calendar month plus 7 days).

As a rule, the young person is always paid in advance and welfare benefits are always paid in arrears.

Supporting information and identity documents should have been obtained prior to a young person's 18th birthday, in preparation for a claim that should be started in advance of the 18th birthday and workers should contact the DWP one week (at the latest) after the young person's birthday to verify the completion of the claim and the first payment date.

If the young person has not received their first benefit payment after 5 weeks (depending on the reason for this), they should be supported to claim a Universal Credit Advance from the DWP, or a hardship payment from WSCC.

Savings

Child Trust Funds

If you were born between 1 September 2002 and 2 January 2011, you might have a Child Trust Fund. This is a long-term savings account for a child.

If you have a Child Trust Fund, visit GOV.UK to find out more.

Looked After Children (LAC) Junior ISA

As a Looked After child, and then as a care leaver, young people are able to access The Junior ISA – [click here for further detail](#).

The **Junior ISA** is set up by the Share Foundation on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE) and has now replaced Child Trust Funds. When it's set up, £200.00 is put in it by the government and, over time, that amount grows a little. At the age of 18, the young person can request for some or all the money to be paid to them. However, the ISA will only be available if the following criteria apply:

- a. Must have been born *before* 1st September 2002 or *after* 2nd January 2011.
- b. Must have been in care for at least 12 months uninterrupted.
- c. Must be under the age of 18 (on application).

Debt

If a young person finds themselves getting into debt, the SW / PA will help contact companies they owe money to and arrange a repayment plan that is affordable. Alternatively, they will introduce them to a debt advice service for help.

Financial Support for Young People who have children

The Leaving Care Service is not responsible for the financial support of Care Leavers children. However, we do want to assist our Care Leavers to provide the best possible start in life for their children.

Where a young person is working or attending education, they may be able to get support for childcare and the social worker / Personal Adviser should support them with accessing these benefits / entitlements. Former Relevant young people will be entitled to claim Income Support eleven weeks prior to the due date of the child and for a Sure Start Maternity Grant if not employed.

For new parents they may be able to access a Sure Start Maternity Grant to purchase items such as a pram, cot and other essential equipment. Further details about the grant can be found by [clicking here](#).

Young people will also be entitled to claim Child Benefit for their children and may also qualify for tax credits. The Personal Adviser must assist the young person to explore what they may be entitled to.

Where all other options have been exhausted, the Leaving Care Service may provide financial assistance from its 'hardship' budget at the discretion of the Group Manager.

Sick or Disabled Young People Entitled to Welfare Benefits

Transfer to welfare benefits at age 16 or when entitlement to Employment and Support Allowance/Universal Credit commences.

Due to having an entitlement to welfare benefits and when the young person is in receipt of the benefits, the Personal Allowance will cease. All other allowances remain.

See Benefits Guidance –

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits>

<https://www.benefitsguide.co.uk/>

Young People Detained / in custody in YOI, STC, SCH or in Hospital

For those young people in custody / on remand or receiving compulsory hospital treatment, an allowance of £20 per month will be paid to the relevant establishment by postal order. This is to allow the young person access money to be spent in the prison shop as allowed under the terms of their sentence and the regime of the institution they are resident.

Prior to release the Personal Adviser must work with the young person, the prison and probation to identify future needs, including accommodation and assess what financial support is required and if the SUHA can be used to support this.

Young people who are incarcerated past their 21st birthday, but due for release before their 25th birthday may be able to access remaining SUHA on release. They should be advised to contact either the Leaving Care Helpline or their local Find It Out Centre for a discussion on what the funds would be used for and how to access them. Any request to access funds should be made to a Team Manager or Service Leader.

Birthdays

It is important to recognise that birthdays are an important milestone that as corporate parents we should celebrate with the young person.

18th Birthday - Personal Advisors can purchase a £100 voucher

19th Birthday onwards - Personal Advisors can purchase a £15 voucher

The birthday allowance will only be paid to young people who remain in active contact with their social worker or leaving care personal adviser and are engaged in the pathway planning process.

Each Find It Out Centre has a supply of birthday and celebration cards which can be used for Social Workers / Personal Advisors to give to young people. Personal Advisors should also 'go the extra mile' to recognize other key events and points of celebration and recognize this by sending a greetings card.

Christmas / Festivals

The Christmas / festival allowance will only be paid to young people who remain in active contact with their social worker or leaving care personal adviser and are engaged in the pathway planning process.

Young people who are non-Christians will be given a choice as to when their festival allowance is to be provided. If they do not have a preference, the allowance should be made available at Christmas to ensure that they receive their entitlement.

Leaving Care Service will assist young people to access services aimed at meeting their religious needs depending on an assessment of need.

The Leaving Care Service recognises that young people may require financial support to take part in religious or cultural festivals, which may involve travel to be with friends and family or the purchase of particular items.

The LCS will support these payments through the SUHA to a maximum of £50 per year where they form part of a planned activity. This should be discussed with the young person and included in their pathway plan.

Travel and contact costs

For Care Leavers over 18, there may be exceptional circumstances where travel costs will be paid. These costs should always be discussed in advance with the Team Manager before agreeing with the young person. The Leaving Care Service will only pay for travel on public transport or travel in private cars in exceptional circumstances.

If travel is agreed by the Leaving Care Team Managers, this should be booked through the Travel Hub.

See Appendix 4 Quick Reference Guide for further detail on what travel is covered.

Social Activities and Leisure

Where appropriate and dependent on an assessment of need, Leaving Care Service will consider paying for the membership of a hobby or leisure club and contribute towards the cost of equipment or special clothing/fees or contribute towards the cost of a social activity. This could include the cost of trial sessions and a contribution to travel costs – this would be funded from the health element of the SUHA.

Young people should be encouraged and assisted to explore the leisure if a scheme exists in that area.

Key Documents

The Leaving Care Service now has an internal arrangement for the provision of birth certificates. Should a young person need a birth certificate the normal £10 fee will be waived on application by stating on the application that the young person is a care leaver. The Team Managers are certified officers and will be able to verify the entitlement.

The application form can be found on 'The Point' by [clicking here](#).

The Leaving Care Service will provide funds for a Passport and Driving License or renewal Passport as required whilst they are in our service for over 18's.

Travel documents based on assessment of need and only where the young person is travelling immanently and do not have a passport from their country of origin;

Funding for British Citizenship Applications will be dependent on individual circumstances and senior manager approval.

Extended Duties - Young People Returning to the Local Authority Aged 21 to 25

Young people are entitled to resume or continue a leaving care service from the age of 21 to 25 on request.

The primary purpose of the support from age 21 to 25 is to provide continuity and on-going practical support and guidance. Where young people require financial support, personal advisers will assist the young person to identify universal sources of financial support to enable young people to be self-sustaining. In very exceptional circumstances and following an assessment of need, a request for financial support (usually provided in kind) will be considered.

Health and Wellbeing

Young people may need financial support for their health needs. In the first instance young people should be supported to budget for these and use their own income / access grants and free entitlements where possible.

Care leavers under the age of 19 and in full time education will generally be exempt from the majority of NHS charges. For others they may be able to claim assistance via the NHS Low Income Scheme by completing forms HC1 (SC) and HC1. Further details are available by [clicking here](#).

Lone parents and sick and disabled young people in receipt of Income Support or Employment and Support Allowance will be exempt from NHS prescription charges, dental charges and sight tests by virtue of their specific benefit claims. However, it is recognized that in some instances there will be a need to be discussed with the individual and assessed by the Personal Advisor. Areas where financial support may be needed are: -

- Dental Work
- Glasses / Opticians payments
- Costs for travel to attend medical or therapeutic appointments
- Ante Natal Care

Religious Needs

Leaving Care Service will assist young people to access services aimed at meeting their religious needs depending on an assessment of need.

The Leaving Care Service does not support travel costs for regular worship or attendance at church / mosque.

Discretionary Payments

Generally, we will not make any ongoing payments to any care leaver with recourse to public funds as it is expected that they will be accessing benefits (Universal Credit) to support themselves. There are, however, exceptional circumstances where they may need some help. The decision is made by considering the following:

- Are there genuine safeguarding concerns and would they be placed at immediate risk if they do not receive financial support?
- Is there a SMART plan in place (reflected in a Pathway Plan) of how you and your Personal Advisor will try to overcome your current money issues?
- Have they provided a bank statement to confirm that they have nothing in your account?
- If Universal Credit payment has stopped, the young person should access an Advance Payment from your local Jobcentre?

If we can help, the young person will be offered one or more of the following:

- Food Vouchers
- Food Parcel and toiletries
- Referral to a food bank
- Direct payment to your bank account

The request will be entered into their Pathway Plan to keep a record. There will be a discussion within the plan of their money situation and how we can work together to improve it. If we do offer to pay money to their bank account, the young person will not receive the payment immediately; it will take at least 2-3 working days owing to the way our financial systems work.

Corporate Parent Payment (at the discretion of the Group Manager)

Gift for new baby, flowers and clothing for family bereavement, terminal illness etc, a payment or cost normally met by a family member.

Education, Training and Employment Related Support

All financial support is dependent on an individual assessment of need. There may also be access to welfare benefits and charitable donations and support.

Leaving Care Service may provide financial assistance for costs associated with education or training courses or employment opportunities of the young person's choice, depending on an assessment of need which includes the course/activity suitability. Where appropriate, Leaving Care Service may consider funding for extra tuition.

All education, training and employment support (practical and financial) will be based on the local offer and recorded in the young person's pathway plan.

The ETE element of the SUHA can be used to purchase items which will assist a young person to access employment. This component is £500 of the allowance. Items such as clothing for interviews and reasonable travel expenses to get to interviews are an example.

The Leaving Care Service will also fund reasonable travel expenses for a maximum of the first month of employment, to allow for their salary to start payment. Uniform, clothing, shoes and other equipment that the employer does not provide can also be purchased using the SUHA.

Financial Support for accessing employment / volunteering

Should the young person be seeking or successful in securing a volunteer or work experience placement, the Leaving Care Service will negotiate with the relevant parties to enable full access to the opportunity.

If the young person has children, they may be eligible for free childcare or be able to access childcare vouchers. The personal adviser should support the young person to access these. Further information can be found on the .gov.uk website by [clicking here](#).

Education & Training Young People Aged 18 and Older

Further Education Courses

West Sussex is committed to assisting and supporting young people to maximise their potential through educational and training opportunities.

Course fees for young people in further education between the ages of 16 – 19 years old are usually paid for in full by the Local Education Authority (LEA), where the course is approved by the LEA. Young people aged 19 years and over who continue with further education, may also get help with the costs of the course fees from the LEA if they are in receipt of certain welfare benefits. They may also be able to access Learner Support Funds and Hardship Funds directly from the college.

1. From the age of 18 to the end of the academic year following their 21st birthday, care leavers who are 'estranged from their families' and who are studying full time (12 hours or more of 'guided learning') can claim Universal Credit on the grounds of being in 'Relevant Education' and they do not have to be available for employment. Young people can start or change courses at any point but will only receive benefits up until the end of the academic year they turn 21.
2. Where young people aged 21 to 25 wishes to resume or commence education or training, the following guidelines regarding financial support will apply;
 - Young people should contact the duty worker for the leaving care team that supported them prior to their 21st birthday (or, up to the end of their previous education/training course if completed after 21).
 - An assessment of need will be undertaken by a leaving care personal adviser.
 - Funding will be considered by the Care Leaving Service following an assessment of need (including access to financial resources) and will be based on the motivation and commitment of the young person to undertake, sustain and complete the course in line with the following principles:
 - Full time courses – Personal advisers and young people should check if they qualify for Universal Credit. Some unemployed young people on non-degree education courses may qualify for Universal Credit where it is deemed that the course is improving their employability and it does not interfere with their commitment to look for work.
 - Lone parents with children under 3 and disabled young people can also undertake courses, as they should be receiving benefits without having to look for work anyway.

Further Education & Training (21 to 25)

Access arrangements to Further Education courses are the same as young people aged 18 to 21.

Each case will be individually assessed to consider the following;

- Suitability of the higher education course
- Motivation to engage and learn
- Capacity to maintain attendance of at least 85%

The outcome of this assessment will determine the level of support required and offered by the Leaving Care Service.

Learner Support or Advanced Learner Loans may be available from Student Finance England (<https://www.gov.uk/further-education-courses/financial-help>).

UASC young people (aged 21 and over) will be unable to access support from WSCC to attend Further Education until such time as they have received a decision from the Home Office that they have been offered refugee status or humanitarian protection with a minimum of 5 years leave to remain.

Higher Education

Student Finance

The level of fees, loans, grants, and bursaries for higher education student's change each academic year. The most accurate and up to date information is available via the following link:

<http://www.gov.uk/studentfinancesteps>

To qualify for a tuition fee loan the part time course needs to be at least 25% of an equivalent full-time course each year (e.g. four years instead of one-year full time). The tuition fee loan is provided by Student Finance England and is paid directly to the university to cover the full cost of the course.

Maintenance Loans

The maintenance loan is provided by Student Finance England and is paid directly to the student, normally in three instalments and is provided to help with living costs such as rent, food, bills and equipment and books.

- In the final year of the course the maximum loan rate is reduced by approximately 10%.
- Young people who get the maximum Maintenance Grant will receive a reduced Maintenance Loan.
- Term time accommodation costs should be met from the student finance package available through Student Finance England. Students will be expected to apply for the Non-Repayable Maintenance Grant for their daily living needs.
- Some universities and colleges pay bursaries and offer additional support for young people who have been in care. Further details can be found on the Buttle Trust website by [clicking here](#) or the UNITE foundation website by [clicking here](#). Dependent on financial budgeting, it may be appropriate for them to seek part time employment during term time to support living costs.

Vacation allowance for University accommodation – WSCC will pay your accommodation costs outside of term time (Christmas, Easter & Summer)

Higher Education Bursary

The Care Leavers Higher Education Bursary is provided by West Sussex County Council and is provided as a minimum grant of £2,000.00 throughout the length of the whole course.

A Higher Education Bursary of £2,000.00 which is provided over the period of a two, three- or four-year course. Depending on the length of the course the £2,000.00 per course will be constituted of £1,000.00 per year (2-year course) H.E. Bursary, £666.67 per year (3-year course) H. E. Bursary, £500.00 per year (4-year course) H. E. Bursary.

Graduation

WSCC may pay towards the costs of gown hire and mortar, graduation photos etc.

Loan Repayment

Graduates repay the combined tuition fee and maintenance loan when they have finished studying and are earning over £25,000.00 per year. The monthly repayments are linked to the person's income. After a certain amount of time (30 years), any outstanding loans will be written off, if the money has not been repaid.

Support from Individual Universities

In addition to the financial support provided by Student Finance England, most Higher Education Institutions will offer their own financial support. Each university will have its own eligibility criteria and any awards may only be available to a limited number of students:

- **Bursaries**
- **Scholarships**
- **Fee Waivers**

Bursaries and Scholarships will generally not have to be repaid and Fee Waivers are applied to part, or all the course costs.

Access to Learning Fund

Most universities also have an 'Access to Learning Fund' which is available to students who are experiencing financial hardship. Some universities offer care leavers priority access to Access to Learner Funds. Sometimes known as Fair Access Funds. 'Propel' is hosted by the 'Become' Charity and sets out or links to the support (including financial support) that each higher education institution provides and also includes a named contact at the majority of educational settings.

<https://propel.org.uk/Search/>

National Scholarship Programme (NSP)

The National Scholarship Programme is designed to offer support to students from low income backgrounds. The NSP is funded jointly between the government and individual universities. Individual universities can make their own decisions as to who receives a National Scholarship. Some universities may offer care leavers priority access to the NSP. Support may be offered in a variety of ways including cash grants, reduced cost accommodation or a fee waiver. Any funds received from the NSP are non-repayable.

Grants and Awards from Charitable Trusts

There are other sources of finance available especially for care leavers who are in higher education. Organisations such as the Capstone Care Leavers Trust or the Care Leavers Foundation may consider providing further funding in addition to local authority grants where care leavers may face social exclusion or hardship. Further details can be found at the links below:

<http://www.thecareleaversfoundation.org/>

<http://www.capstonecareleaverstrust.org/home>

General Information

Care leavers considering attending university should check with the universities that they are thinking about applying to, for information about the support that each institution will provide. This information can then assist when making a final choice about which university to apply for as a first, second or third choice.

The students' support service should be able to provide information on both the practical and financial support that may be available.

Information about additional support to care leavers can be found on the Access and Participation Plans that each institution is required to have. Information can be found on the web site of each institution or via:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/>

Welfare Benefits

Most young people who undertake higher education courses are ineligible for Universal Credit. Certain limited groups of young people who undertake higher education courses such as parents, members of a couple, and sick and disabled young people may remain or be eligible for welfare benefits whilst studying. If a young person is entitled to welfare benefits, they will continue to receive the West Sussex Higher Education Bursary.

Parents, couples and sick or disabled students who are in receipt of Welfare Benefits should check with the Department for Work and Pensions regarding the rules about student finance. Being in receipt of student finances may cause disqualification from certain welfare benefits. The DWP will assume that the student has taken out Student Loans, and their benefit will take that loan into account, apart from the childcare grant, the Special Support loan element for those on benefit-level income, the Disabled Students Allowance and the Parents Special Allowance.

Higher Education Financial Support in other Authorities

Hertfordshire

Higher Education Grant which includes the Government's Higher Education Bursary can be accessed once (for 4 years) at any point between a young person's 18th and 25th birthday.

All young people entering higher education are entitled to: -

- A one-off Computer Grant for a notepad or lap-top depending on an assessment of need and if not previously accessed).
- A Stationery Grant, Educational Visits and Books and Equipment Grant of up to £475.00

The Grant is per academic year (assessed each year), is not transferable and is only available for stationery, educational visits and books and equipment.

A Vacation Living Allowance - £58.90 per week for 22 weeks.

Financial support for Post Graduate Courses

In addition to providing support with first degree courses, WSCC encourage young people to undertake post graduate courses. Following a needs assessment, WSCC may consider making a financial contribution for post graduate courses and also assisting young people to identify other financial support and resources to enable them to undertake post graduate study. Any young person wishing to pursue a course of post-graduate study needs to be discussed with a Team Manager and a full assessment of their chosen course, other funding sources available and their current financial situation will be undertaken before any offer of financial support will be made.

For young people over the age of 20 wishing to pursue a further education course, they may be entitled to support from the Adult Learning Grant scheme. Further details of this can be found by [clicking here](#)

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People and Higher Education

UASC young people will be unable to access support from WSCC to attend Higher Education until such time as they have received a decision from the Home Office that they have been offered refugee status or humanitarian protection with a minimum of 5 years leave to remain. Young people wishing to go to university should have their wishes noted in their pathway plan using triple planning principles.

Financial Support - Traineeships and Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships

Most apprenticeships are classed as employment with a study component. These types of apprenticeships are generally secured by young people gaining employment with a company or organisation that is a registered apprenticeship provider. The young person is employed and undertakes a study component towards a:

- National Vocational Qualification (NVQ);
- Technical Certificate;
- Functional Skills (Mathematics, English);
- Personal Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS);
- ERR (Employment Rights and Responsibilities) Workbook.

All other apprentices are entitled to the National Minimum Wage for their age and can be found on www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates

As the apprentice is in employment, they may be eligible for Universal Credit depending on their circumstances. If the apprenticeship is deemed employment, the young person would not be covered by the age 21-25 Education and Training Care Leaver entitlements.

Traineeships and Programme Led Apprenticeships

These types of traineeships and apprenticeships are provided by a training provider or college, with work experience provided at the establishment site, and are therefore deemed education/training rather than employment. Young people may be eligible for Universal Credit depending on their age and circumstances. In general, young people aged 21 to 25 will not be able to access Universal Credit (unless they are parents or have a disability). Support may be considered subject to an assessment of need.

On assessment, young people who are on apprenticeships and college study over age 19 where they cannot get the 16-19 college bursary, the local authority may provide assistance with travel, once all other avenues of funding have been explored.

For young people over the age of 20 wishing to pursue a further education course, they may be entitled to support from the Adult Learning Grant scheme. Further details of this can be found by [clicking here](#).

Section 6 – Rewards and Recognition for Participation and Engagement

Rewards and Recognition

It is essential to recognise the valued contribution that children and young people make to help influence and improve services, and for it to be a meaningful and fulfilling activity or process.

Whatever local decisions are made by organisations, it is envisaged that all contributions from young people will be acknowledged in some way, through offering incentives, thanks, recognition, certification, accreditation or reward and also by demonstrating how contributions have influenced decisions and helped to make improvements to services.

Rewards and recognitions are available for children and young people aged between 5 and 21, or 25 if they are Looked After or have a disability.

See Appendix 6 for full DRAFT guidance ([Click Here](#))

Review / Contacts / References

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Related internal policies, procedures, guidance:

**Permanence Practice Guidance
Public Law Outline
S20 Practice Guidance
CLA Practice Guidance**

Document owner:

Lead contact / author:

Section 7 – Appendices

Appendix 1 - Financial responsibility and accountability – delegated authority

All members of staff, regardless of position or status, have a responsibility to manage public money in order to achieve best value. Effective financial management is an integral part of the Personal Advisor role and must be considered when assessing need and formulating Pathway Plans. Competence in the area of financial management is necessary alongside other professional responsibilities and in the event of malpractice may be subject to scrutiny under West Sussex County Council Capability or Disciplinary Procedures.

- **Delegated Authority**

All financial requests require the authorization of a Team Manager, Service Manager or Principal Manager, unless taken from other financial sources which are already pre- authorised. The amount requested will determine the authorizing manager as detailed below:

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| ○ In the absence of a manager in emergency up to £200 | Duty Manager |
| ○ £0- £50 | Personal Advisers/SW |
| ○ £50 - 1000 | Team Manager/PM |
| ○ £1000 - £2000 one off payments | Service Manager/GM |
| ○ Individual Invoices over £2000 | Principal Manager/SL |

- **Payment requirements**

1. There must be a clear audit trail from request through to payment.
2. Consideration needs to be given to making payments direct to young people. Where possible this should be the exception and another method to procure goods and service should be used. The learning from the SCR on Liam must be applied in each case.
3. Any changes or amendments to the agreed payments which result in an increase or decrease of financial commitment must be notified immediately to avoid over/under payment to the young person.

- **Evidencing of Payments**

When financial payments are made evidence of the purchase/s made must be sought and retained within the appropriate financial regulatory systems such as those used for P-Card payments. Where cash payments are made via a young person's p-card the Personal Advisor must make every effort to see clear evidence and/or receipts that the cash was utilized for the purpose agreed.

Any identified and evidenced misuse of funds issued under these procedures will result in withdrawal of funds and/or criminal proceedings against those proven to be involved.

All payments made must be recorded and signed for.

- **Payment methods**

There are several methods that can be used to make payments which are:

- Corporate Payment Card (P-Card)
- Young Persons P-Card – online application
- Payment Requisition
- Invoice Plan Agreements
- One Way To Buy
- Expenditure reclaimed via expenses

- Postal Orders

- **Corporate Payment Card (P Card)**

Where possible The Leaving Care Service preferred method of payment for goods and services is by corporate payment card (P-Card) as issued to most employees. If you do not have one, you can request this via your Team Manager.

Corporate P-Cards have a £600 single item limit and a £4000 monthly credit limit for most staff. Some corporate officers have higher limits. P-Cards operate in the same way as personal credit cards and the monthly bill is settled centrally on a monthly basis.

Personal Advisers wishing to use their P-Card to purchase goods and services are able to do so without further authorization up to the value of £50 per single item. For amounts over £50 and less than £1000 a Team Manager must authorize the spend.

Requests and authorization for P Card purchases must be supported by an audit trail which should be an email trail from the Personal Adviser to the Team Manager and their reply. This should be uploaded to the young person's record on Mosaic.

It is important to note that corporate P-Cards cannot be used to withdraw cash from an ATM or used at Petrol Stations (and some shops attached to them).

The corporate p-card policy can be found by clicking [here](#). Guidance on the completion of the online p-card return (SDOL) can be found by clicking [here](#).

- **Young Persons Pre-Paid Card**

It is recommended that all young people with financial capacity are issued with a pre-paid payment card and PIN number. Where there is concern over their financial capacity, young people should not be provided with a pre-paid card.

New cards can be ordered by sending an online request to the Team Manager, who will forward the request with their authorization.

Pre-paid cards are not sent out in the post, they must be collected and signed for either by the young person, their Personal Adviser or a nominated officer. Cards can be collected from one of the major hubs, which are as below

- Durban House, Bognor Regis
- Centenary House, Durrington
- County Hall North, Horsham
- Crawley Library, Crawley

Cards are usually ready for collection within 4 hours or the morning of the next working day. The Personal Adviser should specify in the online request where the card will be collected from.

Young People's pre-paid cards can be loaded with a maximum of £300 per day. Ideally they should be used only in exceptional circumstances (Where the young person doesn't have a bank account) and where the Personal Adviser is certain the young person can be trusted to use the funds for the purpose agreed.

It is important to ensure the details on the form are correct and current. It is also important to ensure the correct budget and GL codes are specified. Please refer to the relevant section of this guidance.

Pre-paid cards should not be used for securing property lettings and deposits, these should be made using WSCC procurement cards (WSCC P-Cards) or payment requisition. In emergency situations, CHAPS payments may be authorised, but these attract a fee of £50 per transaction and will only be made in very exceptional circumstances with the authorization of the Director of Family Operations.

- **Payment Requisition**

A payment requisition is most commonly used where payments are of a significant amount and a p-card cannot be used / is not accepted, or where there is a specific requirement to pay monies direct to a bank account.

In practice this is usually when we are paying a letting agent / landlord the deposit and first month's rental for a new property. It can also be used when paying rent arrears or for other large purchases.

It is not usually considered good practice to pay monies to a young person's bank account unless there are good reasons to do so.

The payee does not need to be an existing vendor. In addition, it is not essential that the payee provides bank details (though this is preferred), as a cheque can be issued. Cheques requested for higher values will be queried by OWTB (One Way To Buy) to ensure best practice is being followed.

Where payments are to be made direct to a bank account, evidence must accompany the request form of the recipient's bank details. There are four forms of evidence that are acceptable: -

- Letter from the account holder / signatory specifying account no. and sort code
- Email from the account holder / signatory specifying account no. and sort code
- Copy of bank statement showing account no. and sort code
- Copy of paying in slip showing account no. and sort code.

Text or verbal messages are not acceptable.

The 'requestor' (usually the Personal Adviser) will need to complete a Payment Requisition Form, which needs to be signed by them and then sent to the certifying officer. The payment requisition form can be found on SharePoint by [clicking here](#). Guidance on how to complete the form can be found in Appendix 6 at the back of this document.

The Certifying Officers for Leaving Care are the Team Managers and Service Leader. They will review and if approved the request will then be forwarded to the Accounts and Purchasing Team, or attached to an email, sent only from the managers email account to: PaymentRequisitions@westsussex.gov.uk. This will provide a clear audit trail to indicate that approval has taken place. Managers will also record the spend on a central log.

As with all payment methods, the audit trail must be saved to Mosaic and the young person's SUHA record updated.

- **Invoice Plan Agreements**

An invoice plan is similar to the payment requisition, but instead is used where there is a fixed amount paid for a defined period to a supplier, where payment is exempt from VAT, such as rentals, insurance or leasing where the vendor is not a regular supplier to the Local Authority.

A contract with the supplier (agreed before setting up the invoice plan and referred to on the purchase order) needs to be in place.

Invoice Plan Agreements mean that the supplier does not submit invoices, and no goods receipting needs to be done. This is a very efficient method of payment.

Where payments are to be made direct to a bank account, evidence must accompany the request form of the recipient's bank details. There are four forms of evidence that are acceptable: -

- Letter from the account holder / signatory specifying account no. and sort code
- Email from the account holder / signatory specifying account no. and sort code
- Copy of bank statement showing account no. and sort code
- Copy of paying in slip showing account no. and sort code.

Text or verbal messages are not acceptable.

The 'requestor' (usually the Personal Adviser) will need to complete an Invoice Plan Agreement form, which needs to be signed by them and then sent to the certifying officer as with a payment requisition.

The invoice plan agreement template can be downloaded from SharePoint by [clicking here](#). Guidance on how to complete the form is shown in appendix 7 at the back of this document.

This will be reviewed and if approved the original hard copy will then be forwarded to the Accounts and Purchasing Team, or attached to an email, sent only from the certifying officers email account to: invoiceplans@westsussex.gov.uk. This will provide a clear audit trail to indicate that approval has taken place.

As with all payment methods, the audit trail must be saved to Mosaic and the young person's SUHA record updated and saved to the documents section.

- **One Way To Buy**

To pay a supplier, such as 'a man with a van', invoices should be settled using the one way to buy process.

You must go through OWTB in order for a purchase order to be produced and sent to the supplier. All WSCC suppliers must have a purchase order number to quote on their invoices. This is an audit requirement. Any invoices that do not quote a purchase order number will be rejected and returned to the supplier.

All goods and services to be paid for in this way must be approved in advance by a Team Manager or Service Manager.

- **Postal Orders**

There are a few occasions where it will be necessary to use postal orders to fulfill payment needs; one such example is when sending money to a young person in custody.

However, Corporate Procurement Cards (P-Cards) are not accepted as a means of payment for postal orders by the Post Office.

The only way to purchase a postal order is put money on to a pre-paid p-card and then withdraw the cash to use in the Post Office. The process for loading the card is the same as for a young person's p-card, using the SOS5 form, authorised by a Team Manager.

For young people in custody, a pre-paid card can be ordered and held by the Personal Adviser and used to withdraw cash to purchase the postal order. The postal order should always be made payable to the Prison and not to the young person. The prison will credit the young persons 'account' for use internally.

This process should be managed by the administrator not the personal advisor.

Appendix 2 - Rates of Payment to Foster Carers 2020/2021

Skills Fee – Total weekly rate per household

Level 1 – Recruited

One Child – £94.15
 Two Children – £140.35
 Three Children – £186.55
 Four Children – £232.75
 Five Children – £278.95

Level 2 – Skilled

One Child – £129.01
 Two Children – £175.21
 Three Children – £221.41
 Four Children – £267.61
 Five Children – £313.81

Level 3 – Advanced/Specialist

One Child – £247.73
 Two Children – £293.93
 Three Children – £340.13
 Four Children – £386.33
 Five Children – £432.53

Level 4* - Advanced/Specialist (*Level 4 is being phased out)

One Child – £333.76
 Two Children – £379.96
 Three Children – £426.16
 Four Children – £472.36
 Five Children – £518.56

All-inclusive Allowance – Weekly rate

Age
 0 – 4 £160.44
 5 – 10 £190.82
 11 – 15 £217.70
 16 – 18 £262.99

Parent & Child – Total weekly rate

£803.39

Day Care

Standard Placements £6.10 p/h
 Specialist scheme placements £8.14 p/h

Suggested Pocket Money (Guide rate by age)

Age 5 £2.00

Age 6	£2.50
Age 7	£3.00
Age 8	£3.50
Age 9	£4.00
Age 10	£4.50
Age 11	£5.00
Age 12	£6.00
Age 13	£7.50
Age 14	£10.00
Age 15	£12.50
Age 16	£13.00
Age 17	£13.50
Age 18	£14.00

Other

- A pro-rata nightly allowance is payable for periods of less than a full week.
- School mileage in excess of sixty miles per week per child (up to a maximum of 120 miles ie two children) is paid at **46.9 pence p/mile**.
- Contact/Other mileage in excess of 30 miles per week (Sunday to Saturday) is payable at **46.9 pence p/mile**.
- In the event of a taxi being commissioned to transport a child to school, **£30 per week** (pro-rata if only some journeys are commissioned) will be deducted from the AIA for the duration of the service.
- **£15 per week** will be deducted from the AIA if the child attends contact by taxi.
- Public transport expenses in excess of **£15 per child per week** for contact and in excess of **£30** for school may be claimed via your supervising social worker.
- Clothing Allowance is up to **£100** per child (under 11 years old) and **£125** per child (11 years and older).
- Uniform Allowance is up to **£75** per child (or **£100** if uniform requires logo) attending primary school and **£150** for secondary school.
- Disturbance Fee (payable for each respite episode of three nights or less) is **£13.95**.
- The first £150 of a school trip must be met by AIA and also 50% of the remaining balance. A contribution of the other 50% can be requested from EPP. The EPP contribution is limited to £500 for the first week and £300 for additional weeks.
- Hospital car parking costs within the county can be claimed over £3 per week.
- Cot mattress costs in excess of £40 will require EPP approval.

Appendix 3 - Guidance on the Provision of Financial Support to Children aged 16 or 17 who are A) Placed with Parents, or B) Return to Live with Parents in a Planned, or Unplanned Manner

Principles:

- Wherever possible, parents should be financially responsible for their own children and should not be funded by the local authority to support their own children.
- Where financial allowances are provided to parents, these should not create inequalities with other siblings and children within the family/household who have not been looked after.
- The rules on a parent’s eligibility for benefits for a child placed at home or returning home after the age of 16 is complex and is dependent on whether they are eligible, relevant or qualifying, being resident with the parent and whether the child is undertaking education or training.

Section 1

Placement with Parents – Children Reaching the Age of 16 Subject to a Care Order or Interim Care Order (Living with a Parent)

The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 (revised 2015) and associated Guidance sets out that the Responsible Local Authority is required to assess and meeting the needs, including the financial needs of an ‘Eligible’ (and ‘Relevant’) child.

Her Majesties Revenue and Customs (HMRC) Guidance sets out that where a child is aged under 16 and is resident with a parent and is undertaking full-time education or training, the parent will normally be eligible for child benefit. As a result of being eligible for child benefit, the parent should also be eligible for either child tax credit and/or working tax credit (depending on income) or Universal Credit (UC), and any benefits arising from a child’s disability such as DLA/PIP. Where a child is placed with a parent, a transitional payment equivalent to the indicative level of child benefit and either child tax credit/working tax credit or UC that a parent would be entitled to will be provided for a period of up to six weeks. On average it takes five to six weeks to establish a child benefit and either a child tax credit / working tax credit claim or Universal Credit claim.

The rules on benefit entitlement where children return to parents after their 16th birthday are complex, and entitlement should be checked with the Council’s Money Advice Unit or the DWP and HMRC.

Transitional payment example (the amounts set out below are based on Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit indicative amounts, the amount paid under Universal Credit may differ):

Child benefit equivalent -	£21.05	£13.95 (second child)
Child tax credit:		
Child element -	£54.42	£54.42

Total Paid – 6 weeks maximum £75.47 £68.37

For a parent to be eligible for child benefit and either tax credits or Universal Credit no part of the child’s accommodation or maintenance costs should be met by the local authority, as such Children’s Services should set a date to cease any transitional payments. The date to cease financial support should be set at a point between five and six weeks after a placement with a parent or a return home (prior to age 16).

Child benefit can continue or be reinstated if a child is residing with a parent on a regular basis, generally on at least 2 nights per week from Monday to Sunday or is home for a complete week. – HMRC Guidance.

- Where a child was placed with a parent/s prior to their 16th birthday a review of the financial support for the child and parent/s must take place when the child becomes an ‘**Eligible**’ child. The review must be undertaken within the framework of the Leaving Care Assessment of Need.
- If the child/young person is engaged in education or training the child benefit and tax credits/Universal Credit will continue once the child reaches the age of 16.

The majority of ‘Eligible’ children will be living in foster care, residential care or, in a placement deemed ‘Other Arrangements’. The financial support provided to the child will be set out in the fostering financial policy, residential financial policy and leaving care financial policy.

1. In situations where a child aged 16 or 17 is placed with a parent or returns home to live with a parent and is not engaged in any education or training, the leaving care financial policy provides guidance on the provision of any allowances.
2. In situations where a child aged 16 or 17 is placed with a parent or returns home to live with a parent and is engaged in education or training, the leaving care financial policy provides guidance on the provision of any allowances, if the young person remains eligible (due to the child being on a care order), the parent is likely to become eligible for benefits, if the care order is revoked, the parent is unlikely to be eligible for benefits for the first 6 months of the return home, thereafter the parent is likely to be able to apply for child benefit and tax credits/Universal Credit.
3. In situations where a child aged 16 or 17 is placed at home or returns home and is not engaged in education or training a parent will not be eligible to claim child benefit or benefits. Therefore, the local authority will need to provide an allowance.

In circumstances where the child is living with a parent/s and the Care/Pathway Plan is focused on revoking the Care Order, or Interim Care Order, both the assessment of, and financial support should be based on assisting the transition to parental financial support and for the child to enter/resume or continue education or training.

The primary aim of leaving care financial support for 16 & 17 year olds is to enable young people to prepare for independent living and develop money management skills; as such, each young person should have an assessment of their individual leaving care financial needs and any subsequent allowance provided to those not in education or training should be provided to the young person in a manner that assists with the development of these skills and a return to education or training.

Young people aged 16 & 17 placed with parents who are not engaged in education or training should therefore be provided with the standard Leaving Care Maintenance Allowance of £58.90 per week (£78.90 UC uplift) (2020-2021).

In order to avoid any inequalities within the family, by the provision of leaving care support, an assessment must be undertaken regarding the need for supplementary allowances, i.e. those in addition to the Leaving Care Maintenance Allowance. For example, where there are children in the family who have not been looked after, it may be inappropriate to provide any allowances other than the Leaving Care Maintenance Allowance if these allowances create disparities, inequalities and potentially undermine parenting responsibilities.

The provision of a leaving care birthday allowance for one child would potentially create an inequality if other family members do not receive a similar allowance, as such, the leaving care birthday allowance should not be provided and parents therefore take responsibility for the level of all birthday allowances to their children. The assessment of, and the reason behind this decision should be made using the guidance contained at the start of this document in the section 'Assessing the Provision of Allowances for 16 & 17 Year Olds' and should be set out in the young person's Care/Pathway Plan.

When developing a Care/Pathway Plan for a young person placed with parent/s or living with a parent/s who is not engaged in education or training, consideration should be given to whether the young person should provide a percentage of their Leaving Care Maintenance Allowance to their parent/s as a contribution to living costs. The level of the contribution should be set out in the young person's Care/Pathway Plan. For example, it may be appropriate that the young person retain an amount equivalent to the fostering pocket money and clothing allowance elements i.e. £35.84 (fostering pocket money £13.60 and clothing allowance £22.24) and provide a contribution to the parent of £23.06 per week (2020-2021). Due to the UC Coronavirus uplift applied for 2020-2021 the basic allowance will be £78.90.

In circumstances where a contribution has been set and the young person does not make the necessary contribution, the amount set can be deducted from the young person's Leaving Care Maintenance Allowance and paid directly to the parent/s.

As noted above, there is an obligation on the local authority to provide financial assistance to young people leaving care that would normally fall on parents, and/or on the welfare benefit system. Being an Eligible or Relevant child not engaged in education or training (regardless of them being placed at home) disqualifies parents from welfare benefits/tax credits/universal credit. In situations where the child is not engaged in education or training the leaving care finance policy framework should be used as the framework for the provision of allowances to the child and/or parent).

The majority of Eligible or Relevant children, regardless of being engaged in education or training are disqualified from welfare benefits/tax credits/universal credit, except for sick and disabled children and children who are also lone parents.

In circumstances where a care leaver aged 16 or 17 is placed/living with a parent who is in receipt of a welfare benefit/tax credit/universal credit, the difference between the young person's Leaving Care Maintenance Allowance and the level of the welfare benefit/tax credits/universal credit that the parent would be entitled to in respect of that child, (if they were not an Eligible or Relevant child) can be provided directly to the parent/s. This would only apply to a child not engaged in education or training.

Care Order Revocations and Ceasing Financial Allowances

Where an 'Eligible' child has lived with a person with parental responsibility for at least 6 months and they cease to be looked after, due to the revocation of the Care Order, or Interim Care Order they become a 'Qualifying' child (a Qualifying child is a 16 to 21/24 year old subject to Section 24 of the Children Act 1989). The 6-month period living with parents that is required to be deemed a Qualifying child, can include time both prior to and after the revocation of the Care Order.

Welfare benefit legislation relating to 'Qualifying' children sets out that both parents and children are entitled to welfare benefits/tax credits/universal credit in their own right.

'Qualifying' child status does not have any impact on either the child, or parents benefit or tax credit entitlements. Once a child is deemed a 'Qualifying' child and following a financial re-assessment of their financial needs, the

majority, if not all, of the leaving care financial support being provided should cease. The primary responsibility for meeting a 'Qualifying' child's financial needs rests with the parent/s.

The detailed financial and practical arrangements to support the child and parent should be set out in the Care/Pathway Plan and Placement Plan. The level of the leaving care financial support should be based on an assessment of need and set out in the Care/Pathway Plan.

Placement with Parents – Children aged 16 or 17 Subject to Care Order or Interim Care Order Being Placed with Parent/s

In circumstances where, following an assessment of suitability, it is deemed appropriate to place a child with a parent/s at the age of 16 or 17, the assessment of financial support to the child and parent should be completed prior to the placement being made and should be set out in the Care/Pathway Plan and Placement Plan.

The principles and financial approach set out above in section 1, i.e. the Leaving Care Maintenance Allowance being provided to the young person (if not engaged in education or training (and for the initial 6 months)), and, an assessment of the need for any additional allowances being undertaken to consider the types and level of financial support to be provided should be followed. The Care/Pathway Plan should be used to evidence and explain the level of, and the types of financial support to be provided.

Section 2

Children aged 16 & 17 Accommodated under Section 20 Returning to Live with a Parent/s in a Planned Manner who Cease to be Looked After and Become 'Relevant' children

In circumstances where it is deemed appropriate for a child to return to a parent/s at the age of 16 or 17, following an assessment of suitability, the evaluation of financial support to the child and/or parent should be completed prior to the child returning to the parent/s. On the child returning to the parent/s the child becomes a 'Relevant' child. Where the young person is undertaking an education or training activity, financial responsibility should transfer to the parent as set out in section 1. Transitional financial support will be provided for a period of four to six weeks.

In circumstances where a young person (subject to section 20) aged 16 & 17 returns to live with a parent, agreement to, and approval of the ceasing to be looked after must be sought from the Director of Children's Services (Operations Director, Specialist Services) – Regulation 39.

In circumstances where the 'Relevant' child is living with a parent/s as part of planned return to a parent/s, both the assessment of, and financial support should focus on assisting the transition to parental financial support. The principles set out above in section 1 should be used to assess the type and level of financial support. The Pathway Plan should be used to evidence and explain the level of, and the types of financial support to be provided (for those not engaged in education or training).

Where a child remains living with a parent/s for six months (after a planned return) the child's status changes from a 'Relevant' child to that of 'Qualifying' child. Once a child becomes a 'Qualifying' child, both parent/s and child are entitled to claim welfare benefits/tax credits like other parents/children. See above section 1.

Once a child is deemed a 'Qualifying' child and following a financial re-assessment of their financial needs, the majority, if not all of the leaving care financial support being provided should cease. The primary responsibility for meeting a 'Qualifying' child's financial needs rests with the parent/s.

Section 3

Children Subject to a Care Order or Interim Care Order Returning to a Parent/s Against the Assessment of the Child's Needs and the Wishes of the Local Authority

Social workers will need to undertake an assessment and risk assessment of the appropriateness of the child remaining with the parent/s where the child has returned to a parent/s against the wishes of the authority and follow due procedure.

Financial support should only be provided to the child in line with the Leaving Care Finance policy. No payment or any percentage of the Leaving Care Maintenance Allowance should be made to the parent/s until it is deemed an authorised placement with parent/s.

The Pathway Plan and the provision of financial support should focus on positive engagement or re-engagement with the child.

Section 4

Children Accommodated Section 20 Returning to a Parent/s Against the Assessment of the Child's Needs and the Wishes of the Local Authority

Social workers will need to undertake an assessment and risk assessment of the appropriateness of the child remaining with the parent/s where the child has returned to a parent/s against the wishes of the authority and follow due process. A statutory review should take place to approve the decision to cease the child's Section 20 status. In circumstances where a young person (subject to section 20) aged 16 & 17 returns to live with a parent, agreement to, and approval of the ceasing to be looked after must be sought from the Director of Children's Services (Operations Director, Specialist Services) – Regulation 39.

Financial support should only be provided to the child in line with the Leaving Care Finance policy (where the young person is not engaged in education or training). No payment or any percentage of the Leaving Care Maintenance Allowance should be made to the parents until it is deemed appropriate for the 'Relevant' child to remain living with the parent/s.

The Pathway Plan and the provision of financial support should focus on positive parental engagement or re-engagement with the child/young person and should support the child/young person to continue/resume education or training.

Summary

In essence, financial support to 16 & 17 year olds living at home should be provided by parents:

- where a child/young person is engaged in an education or training activity, the parent/parents are entitled to claim child benefit/child tax credits or add the child to their universal credit claim (after 6 months with the parent/ceasing to be looked after or on reaching age 16 if placed prior to age 16);
- where children/young people are not engaged in education or training the guidance above and the leaving care finance policy provides the framework for the provision of allowances.

Eligibility Chart:

1	Child – Placed with P – Section 31 prior to the age of 16:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent able to claim child benefit and tax credits/universal credit when child placed.
2	Child – Placed with P – Section 31 prior to the age of 16, reaching age 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent able to claim child benefit and tax credits/universal credit when child placed, these will continue into school year 12 if the child is undertaking education or training. • If the child is not undertaking education or training – parent is not eligible to claim.
3	Child – Placed with P – Section 31 after the age of 16.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent may be eligible to claim child benefit and tax credits/universal credit when child placed, these will continue into school year 12 if the child is undertaking education or training. • If the child is not undertaking education or training – parent is not eligible to claim.
4	Child – Placed with P – Section 31 – care order revoked when the child is aged 16/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent unlikely to be able to claim child benefit and tax credits/universal credit even if the child is undertaking an education or training activity for 6 months after the order is revoked. • If the child is not undertaking education or training – parent is not eligible to claim.
5	Child – returning to live with a parent, person with PR (section 20 ending)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent unlikely to be able to claim child benefit and tax credits/universal credit even if the child is undertaking education or training for 6 months after the return. • If the child is undertaking education or training – parent is eligible to claim benefits after the child has been at home for 6 months. • If the child is not undertaking education or training – parent is not eligible to claim.

Appendix 4 – Quick Reference Guide (Expenditure & Income)

Care Leavers

Type	Amount	Budget / Resource / Cost Centre	Payment methods
Benefits and Hardship Payments			
Benefit equivalent amount of whilst awaiting claim or reclaim (not own fault)	Up to a maximum of £60.00 – however PA should support YP to access hardship payment from JCP – LCS may ‘top-up to £60.00 if required.	Leaving Care Service Budget CC – EF33 GL - 7040	Paid to young person’s pre-paid card or to their bank account (invoice plan). Must be authorised by a Team/Duty Manager
UASC Personal Allowance whilst NRPF	£60.00 per week	UASC Budget CC – JB30 GL – 7040	Paid to young person’s pre-paid card or to their bank account (invoice plan).
LAN Vouchers	Up to £20 per visit Maximum of 4 allowed in a 12 month period	Local Assistance Network	Voucher collected from a Find It Out Centre
Food bank parcels	Up to a maximum of 4 parcels allowed in a 12 month period	Local Food Bank	Voucher collected from a Find It Out Centre
Food Shopping, Gas & Electricity	In emergency / hardship only	Leaving Care Service Budget CC – EF33 GL - 7040	
Discretionary payments where the young person has defaulted on benefits claim	Up to a maximum of £60.00 – however PA should support YP to access hardship payment from JCP – LCS may ‘top-up to £60.00 if required.	Leaving Care Service Budget CC – EF33 GL - 7040	Paid to young person’s pre-paid card or to their bank account (invoice plan). Must be authorised by a Team/Duty Manager
Securing Independent Accommodation			
Holding deposit Referencing fees Agency fees	To be discussed on an assessed basis – usually market rates. Fees should not be paid before viewing of the property is made and sight of a blank tenancy agreement	Central funds CC – EC21 GL - 6804	Paid direct to vendors bank account using a payment requisition Payment Requisitions can only be authorised by the Head of Service Corporate P-Cards can also be used, but bear

			in mind the £600 transaction limit
Deposit	PA should support YP to access deposit schemes via District and Borough Councils before committing WSCC.	Central funds CC – EC21 GL – 6084	As above. Please ensure the rent deposit scheme explicitly cites WSCC for repayment.
Deposit Return (Income)	Deposits being returned to WSCC when a tenancy comes to an end	SUHA, ETE & Health budget Use EC21 8201 as the reference.	By cheque or bank transfer Bank details: Lloyds Bank Sort code 300002 Acc; 00196601
First month's rent (if in receipt of Housing Benefit)	One month's rent in advance.	SUHA, ETE & Health budget (Young person will receive a backdated HB payment) CC – EC21 GL - 6804	As above Deduct from young person's SUHA
First month's rent (if self funding rent)	One month's rent in advance.	SUHA, ETE & Health budget CC – EC21 GL – 6804	As above Deduct from young person's SUHA
Six months' rent in advance	6 months' rent in advance	SUHA, ETE & Health budget – but to be recovered over the six months from housing benefit / wages paid to WSCC account. CC – EC21 GL – 6804 To be paid back to: CC – EC21 GL - 8201	As above Please ensure the young person signs a repayment contract and this is uploaded to mosaic. PA will need to agree a means to monitor repayment (eg access to UC journal/screen shots of bank statement)
'Man with a van' / removal costs	Market rates	SUHA, ETE & Health budget CC - EC21 GL - 6804	OWTB / Personal Advisers P-Card Must be authorized by a Team Manager
Setting up home (Allowance up to £2000 in total)			

1st Years Contents Insurance	Best value quotes should be obtained from a range of providers and young people should be advised of the benefits.	SUHA, ETE & Health budget CC - EC21 GL - 6804	Personal Advisers P-Card
Furniture / household goods / appliances essential items	Please see appendix 2 – items not listed will require authorisation from a team manager.	SUHA, ETE & Health budget CC - EC21 GL - 5000	Personal Advisers P-Card
TV and TV License	Suggested maximum of £150 for a new television. 1 st Years TV license – YP must budget to fund year 2 and so on	SUHA, ETE & Health budget CC - EC21 GL - 5000	Personal Advisers P-Card
Professional Services	Carpet Fitting, Electrician, Plumber etc	SUHA, ETE & Health budget CC – EC21 GL - 5600	OWTB
External Storage Hire	In exceptional circumstances only and with prior agreement with a team manager	SUHA, ETE & Health budget CC – EC21 GL - 5202	OWTB
Higher Education			
Course fees	n/a	Student Loan	Young person should apply via the Student Finance portal. Monies are paid direct to the university.
Accommodation fees (term time)	n/a	Maintenance Loan / Maintenance Grant / Special Support Grant	Young person should apply via the Student Finance portal. Monies are paid direct to the young person.
Accommodation fees (vacation periods)	Up to local market rate for student halls / shared rooms. Vacation periods are Christmas, Easter and Summer Holidays The summer following the completion of the	Uni Central budget CC – EF23 GL - 7083	Dependent on the provider. Payment Requisition, Invoice Plan Agreement or Personal Advisers P-Card could be used. All accommodation should be negotiated

	course is not paid by WSCC.		by the Personal Advisor in advance of vacation period.
Food, clothing and utility bills	n/a	Maintenance Loan / Maintenance Grant / Special Support Grant / part time job to support study	Young person should apply via the Student Finance portal. Monies are paid direct to the young person.
Books, equipment, laptops, activities and other course related costs.	£2000 bursary paid to young person	One off bursary of £2000 paid by the local authority. This does not come from SUHA Normally paid in 3 instalments over the first three terms of the first year. CC – EF23 GL – 7030 If the young person is over 19 and not eligible for a bursary and not at Uni, use the code; SUHA, ETE & Health budget CC - EC21 GL - 7030	Monies are paid to the young person's bank account by Payment Requisition.
Further Education / Employment / Volunteering / Work Experience – (Allowance up to £500 in total)			
College exam fees and registration Text Books, laptop and software Activities to meet course requirements Clothing / PPE specific to course	Not to exceed £500	Vulnerable Student Bursary or Independent Living Grant Over 19's may be able to access funding from an Adult Learning Grant	Vulnerable Student Bursaries are paid direct to the young person from the Student Bursary Support Service For SUHA spends the Personal Advisers P-Card should be used.
Clothing for interviews	Maximum of £75 for suit, shirt and shoes	SUHA, ETE & Health budget CC - EC21	Personal Advisers P-Card In exceptional circumstances money

		GL - 7042	can be added to a young person's pre-paid card or to their bank account (invoice plan). and Team Managers authorization
Travel to interviews	Cost of ticket for public transport	SUHA, ETE & Health budget CC - EC21 GL – 4700	Travel Warrant or Personal Advisers P-Card
Travel to work (paid employment)	Public transport paid for the 1 st month only	SUHA, ETE & Health budget CC - EC21 GL – 4700	Travel Warrant or Personal Advisers P-Card
Travel to work experience / volunteering	Tickets for public transport for no more than 30 days per annum	SUHA, ETE & Health budget CC - EC21 GL – 4700	Travel Warrant or Personal Advisers P-Card
Health			
Dental work / Glasses / Opticians payments	Up to £300	SUHA, ETE & Health budget CC - EC21 GL - 5610	Personal Advisers P-Card
Travel costs to attend medical or therapeutic appointments	Cost of public transport tickets	SUHA, ETE & Health budget CC - EC21 GL - 4700	Travel Warrant or Personal Advisers P-Card
Other Travel Costs (not covered in ETE section)			
Travel to Court Legal appointments Contact visits with family x 3	Cost of public transport tickets Fuel @20p per mile <i>Note – LCS will not fund taxi fares</i>	Leaving Care Service Budget CC – EF33 GL – 4700	Travel Warrant or Personal Advisers P-Card for tickets Fuel reimbursed by payment to young person's p-card (requires Team Manager authorization)

UASC Legal or Home Office appointments / hearings Contact visits with family	Cost of public transport tickets Fuel @20p per mile <i>Note – LCS will not fund taxi fares</i>	UASC Budget CC – JB30 GL – 4700	Travel Warrant or Personal Advisers P-Card for tickets Fuel reimbursed by payment to young person's p-card (requires Team Manager authorization)
Care Leavers with Children			
Pram, cot and other essential equipment	n/a	Sure Start Grant for 1 st child	Sure Start Grant is paid direct to the young person.
Child Care	n/a	The LCS does not fund Child Care however the YP may be entitled to free child care from government schemes	n/a
Discretionary Payments to support Care Leavers with children	With prior approval of the Service Leader only	Leaving Care Service Budget CC – EF33 GL - 7040	PA's P-Card / Young Person's pre-paid card
Young People in Custody / On Remand			
Monthly 'Pocket Money'	Up to £20 per month in line with rules of the specific prison (Personal Adviser should seek guidance from the prison)	Leaving Care Service Budget CC – EF33 GL – 7040	Postal Order (See payments section for details of how to purchase)
Other Costs			
Religious and Cultural Festivals	Up to £50 per year	Leaving Care Service Budget CC – EF33 GL - 5610	Dependent on request – PA's P-Card, Travel Warrants or in exceptional circumstances paid to YP's pre-paid card
Birthdays / Christmas presents	Up to £15 present per annum from Personal	Leaving Care Service Budget	Personal Advisers P-Card

	Adviser purchased by PA and gift wrapped.	CC – EF33 GL - 5610	
Refreshment for YP at PA statutory visit	Up to £10	Leaving Care Service Budget CC – EF33 GL - 5610	Personal Advisers P-Card
Passport	Nominal cost	Leaving Care Service Budget CC – EF33 GL – 5610	Personal Advisers P-Card
Identification / travel docs (UASC)	Nominal cost	Leaving Care Service Budget CC – EF33 GL - 5610	Personal Advisers P-Card
Birth Certificates	Free	n/a	Personal Advisers to order through 'The Point' and use certifying officers name for fee to be waived
Anything else	Discussion with Manager		Discuss with Team Manager in first instance

Appendix 5 - Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

Eligible and Relevant Children

Key Guidance

Social Workers and Personal Advisers must ensure an UASC has applied to extend their leave to remain and the application is submitted to the Home Office before their leave status expires. In the majority of UASC cases their leave status expires at the age of 17½, or on their 18th birthday. If this task is completed and submitted within time the young person is eligible to claim means tested benefits on their 18th birthday. See section on - Access to Public Funds and Welfare Benefits at the end of this appendix.

Consideration should also be given to appealing an initial asylum decision where a young person is granted limited leave to remain.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) are covered by the Children Act 1989 and the provisions of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Guidance and Regulations 2010 [16 & 17 year olds] and the Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers Guidance 2010 (revised 2015) and the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010 (revised 2015) [16 to 21/25 year olds] in exactly the same way as other children in this country.

However, they will also have an immigration status:

1. Applying for Asylum;
2. Accepted as a Refugee;
3. Granted Exceptional Leave to Remain [divided into:
 - a. Humanitarian Protection, or
 - b. Discretionary Leave],
4. Indefinite Leave to Remain;
5. Refused Leave to Remain,

all of which will need to be considered when undertaking their Leaving Care Assessment of Need and developing their subsequent Pathway Plan.

It should be noted that applicants who are granted refugee status may not automatically receive indefinite leave to remain. Applicants granted refugee status may be given limited leave to remain for five-year periods. At the end of each five-year period their circumstances will be reviewed and if the conditions in their home country have improved, they will be expected to return.

Most Eligible and Relevant (16 & 17 year olds) unaccompanied asylum-seeking children will receive the same entitlements as any other young person. However, there may be some differences in entitlement, which will need to be acknowledged in their Pathway Plan. For example, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who are applying for asylum and are awaiting an initial decision or have been granted exceptional leave to remain are not automatically entitled to the 16 - 19 Bursary.

When developing Pathway Plans with Eligible and Relevant (UASC) particular attention must be paid to their immigration status and contingency plans developed which take account of their possible status options at the of age eighteen.

Department for Education guidance highlights that pathway planning for the majority of UASC who do not have a permanent immigration status, should initially take a dual or triple planning perspective, which, over time should be refined as the young person's immigration status is clarified.

Planning may be based on:

- a transitional plan during the period of uncertainty when the young person is in the United Kingdom without permanent immigration status;
- longer term perspective plan in the United Kingdom should the young person be granted long term permission to stay (for example through the grant of Refugee Status); or
- a return to their country of origin at any appropriate point or at the end of the immigration consideration process, should that be necessary because the young person decides to leave the UK or is required to do so.

Failed Asylum Seekers aged 18 to 21/25

Former Relevant Children

Where young people have an immigration status that means they have permission to work and/or have recourse to public funds they will be expected to be working or claiming benefits like other Former Relevant Children. Additionally, West Sussex Children's Services will apply all of the aspects of the Former Relevant Children section of the leaving care financial policy with some exceptions to the Higher Education and Further Education sub-section.

Where young people have:

- limited leave to remain;
- exceptional leave to remain;
- (are) appealed an adverse decision;

they are only eligible for a West Sussex Children's Services Higher Education Grant for higher education courses that finish in the academic year prior to their status expiring.

UASC young people will be unable to access support from WSCC to attend Higher Education until such time as they have received a decision from the Home Office that they have been offered refugee status or humanitarian protection with a minimum of 5 years leave to remain. Young people wishing to go to university should have their wishes noted in their pathway plan using triple planning principles.

West Sussex Children's Services will work with education establishments and training providers to ensure that young people who have limited leave to remain have access to purposeful activities such as short education courses, training opportunities and courses and voluntary activities.

West Sussex Children's Services will support young people to apply for discretionary grants and bursaries to support attendance in education.

Where asylum seeking young people:

- have lodged an asylum application, but do not have an initial decision;
- have no recourse to public funds;
- are all rights exhausted;

they will not be eligible for higher education funding.

West Sussex Children's Services will fund one ESOL course and will only consider funding a second course under exceptional circumstances.

Consideration will be given to supporting young people with short term universal access courses that provide enhanced education and training skills.

Young people who have exhausted all 'avenues and rights' regarding appealing an adverse asylum decision, and/or are unable to extend their exceptional leave to remain, and/or lose access to public funds/the right to work are deemed 'end of line cases' or 'all appeal rights exhausted' cases (at this point the young person will usually receive a removal directions notice).

Where young people lose access to welfare benefits and are deemed 'end of line cases' or 'all appeal rights exhausted' cases, West Sussex Children's Services will provide an allowance commensurate with benefits following the completion of a Human Rights Assessment.

This allowance can continue to be paid until the removal date or the young person's 21st birthday. In addition, the provision of an allowance and accommodation is dependent on the young person remaining in contact with their personal adviser and actively engaging in the pathway planning process.

(See London Borough of Barking and Dagenham [2010] EWCA Civ 1101 - Case Law)

Pathway Planning Guidance

When undertaking the Leaving Care Assessment of Need with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children at age fifteen and a half and subsequently developing their Pathway Plans, social workers and personal advisers must take account of young people's immigration status and how this may limit access to public funds and services at the age of eighteen. Every effort must be made to clarify young people's immigration status as soon as possible in order to develop clear plans for their future e.g. ensure that extensions to Discretionary Leave and Humanitarian Protection are applied for within timescale i.e. six to eight weeks before expiry.

Pathway Plans should explore how an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child's immigration status may limit future support and financial opportunities. Pathway Plans for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children should always incorporate a dual plan approach. For example, Pathway Plans should highlight what support would be given if the young person gains indefinite leave to remain, and an alternative Pathway Plan should highlight what support would be available should they be granted limited leave to remain and/or receive removal directions.

Appealing an Initial Asylum Decision

When young people receive their initial asylum decision consideration should be given to lodging an appeal against the decision if they receive a status other than Indefinite Leave to Remain/Refugee Status. In effect, Limited Leave to Remain is a failed asylum decision. Young people are more likely to obtain a positive decision if they appeal at the first decision stage rather than wait until their limited leave status expires. Social workers and personal advisers should liaise with the young person's solicitor to support/consider an appeal. Young people have to lodge an appeal within a very limited time (14 days of the initial decision). Evidence highlights that a high percentage of initial decision appeals are successful.

Young people who receive an initial decision giving them Limited Leave to Remain for a year or less may not be able to appeal the initial decision.

Summary

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) making the transition from care to adulthood have both a leaving care status and an asylum and immigration status in addition to their placement and accommodation, education, health, financial and religious and cultural needs.

Planning transition to adulthood for UASC is a particularly complex process that needs to address young people's care needs in the context of wider asylum and immigration legislation and how these change over time. Pathway planning to support a UASC's transition to adulthood should cover all areas that would be addressed within all young people's plans as well as any additional needs arising from their specific refugee and immigration status and issues.

The majority of young people making the transition from care to independence, will, with support and assistance develop a settled life in the U.K. Whilst this may be the case for some UASC this may not always apply due to the outcomes of their asylum claim. Planning for many UASC may have to be based around short term achievable goals whilst entitlement to remain in the UK is being determined.

Planning for a return home may be difficult (for both young people and staff working with them), but care and pathway plans should include contingencies for durable and best interest plans for UASC and young people who are likely to have to return to their country of origin. It will be essential that arrangements for returns should be managed in a sensitive and consistent way.

Transition to adulthood planning and pathway planning for the majority of UASC who do not have, a permanent immigration status should initially take a dual or triple planning perspective which over time should be refined as the final asylum outcome becomes known:

- Longer term perspective plan in the United Kingdom should the young person be granted Refugee Status;
- A transitional plan during the period of uncertainty when they are in the United Kingdom without permanent immigration status;
- A return to their country of origin at an appropriate point or at the end of the process should that be necessary due to their immigration status.

Claiming asylum can be a complex process and social workers/personal advisers should work with the young person's legal representative and the dedicated case owner at the Home Office to ensure that the young person understands the process of claiming asylum, the possible outcomes and to provide them with necessary support.

Pathway plans should always consider the implications for the young person if their application to extend their leave to remain or their appeal against refusal of that application is dismissed. In such circumstances the person will become unlawfully present in the United Kingdom and be expected to make plans for return to the country of origin. Pathway plans should highlight the risks associated with young people disappearing ('going underground') to avoid returning and the difficulties associated with returns that occur quickly with little or no planning. Liaison with the Home Office case owner may be necessary to manage these risks.

Schedule 3 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002

It is important that Personal Advisers and others working with the young people understand that their immigration status may affect their eligibility to leaving care support after they turn 18 because of the provisions of Schedule 3 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

This is especially the case for any of the young people who are "unlawfully present in the UK" – which includes those who have been refused asylum and have either not applied for an extension of further Discretionary Leave to remain or have applied for an extension, but that application and any appeal has been rejected.

Liaison with the legal adviser may be required to establish whether Schedule 3 applies in a particular case, as refusal of asylum does not necessarily indicate that a young person is 'unlawfully present in the UK' (but may do).

In these cases, the young people can generally only be supported to the extent necessary to avoid a breach of their human rights (under the European Convention of Human Rights).

For example, if an adult is unlawfully present in the UK, i.e. they have no form of leave to be in the UK and are not an asylum seeker (as they are failed), a local authority is prohibited from providing them with support under the leaving care provisions (and other statutes) unless this is necessary in order to avoid a breach of their human rights, whether in their home country or in the UK.

The section above will be updated when the Immigration Act 2016 Guidance has been issued and the full timescales for implementation issued.

Access to Public Funds and Welfare Benefits

Young people must apply to extend their leave to remain at least two months before their immigration leave status expires. If this task is completed by a young person's eighteenth birthday and they have proof that the Home Office has received their application, the young person is then eligible to apply for benefits. Personal Advisers should obtain a letter from the young person's solicitor that includes details of the young person's immigration status; the date of the application to extend the leave to remain was submitted. The solicitor submits the renewal/extension by recorded post. The recorded post item will have a tracking number that can be used to verify that the Home Office received the application. The letter from the solicitor and a printout of the Post Office tracking statement should be submitted with the young person's benefit claim.

Asylum Seekers, No Recourse to Public Funds, All Rights Exhausted and Human Rights Assessments

Young people reaching the age of 18 who 1) do not have an immigration status and/or 2) young people who are asylum seekers and/or 3) young people who have No Recourse to Public Funds or services and/or 4) young people who are deemed All Rights Exhausted will only be provided with practical and financial support following a Human Rights Assessment and the outcome of the assessment being that the ceasing of support would breach their human rights. Personal Advisers (and those undertaking human rights assessments) will always support young people to explore options of living with family and friends, identifying charitable sources of funding and options for returning to a country of origin.

In all situations where support has been extended as a result of a Human Rights Assessment, the assessment will be reviewed whenever there is a change of circumstances and on a regular (at least six-monthly basis). Where a young person is detained and subject to a Deportation Order or is subject to the Administrative Removal process financial support will cease. Where support is provided as a result of a Human Rights Assessment, the support will cease on the young person reaching age 21.

Introduction

This document provides a framework for recognising and rewarding young people who engage with WSCC Children and Families Service, helping to shape and inform service design, development and evaluation.

The guidelines aim for a consistent approach to a range of young people's involvement and gives examples of how they can be recognised/rewarded for their participation.

By exploring principles for reward and recognition, the intention is for equity across our services. Within our work, a starting point is for young people to understand that they engage voluntarily, without remuneration, as active citizens.

Who is this guidance for?

WSCC staff and partners. Principles in this document will help practitioners plan participatory and consultative activities, so that young people are engaged in a meaningful way. This guidance explains some of the different ways in which young people are involved and recommends the ways in which they could be 'recognised' and 'rewarded' for their participation. By considering a range of incentives, rewards and recognition, practitioners can plan for the time, ideas and energy of young people more consistently, with greater parity.

The guidance recognises flexibility for practitioners to set their own arrangements, based on their resources and priorities. It recommends ways in which to recognise and reward from one-off consultation events through to longer-term involvement such as being a member of a local Youth Forum or a service improvement group.

Why do we need reward and recognition?

Young people make a valuable contribution to service design, evaluation and improvement. Their involvement helps us deliver services based upon their needs. Their ideas may take our thinking forward in new or unpredicted directions. Recognising their input ensures it is a meaningful and fulfilling process for them and underlines the value of active citizenship.

Which age groups does this guidance relate to?

Children and young people aged between 5 and 21, or 25 if they are Looked After or have a disability.

Why should we recognise and reward involvement?

All organisations working with children and young people have a responsibility¹ to ensure that children and young people have a positive experience of engaging with and participating in the improvement and delivery of services.

It is essential to recognise the valued contribution that children and young people make to help influence and improve services, and for it to be a meaningful and fulfilling activity or process.

¹ The **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** (UNCRC), ratified by the UK Government in 1991, is the first piece of international legislation to acknowledge that 'children are subjects of rights rather than merely recipients of protection. Article 12 of the Convention states that children and young people have the right to express their views freely in all areas that they are involved in, and that these views should be listened to. The Quality Protects initiative for looked-after children and young people, introduced in 1998, is an example. Key to this initiative was the belief that local authorities could only develop their services effectively by listening to children and young people

Whatever local decisions are made by organisations, it is envisaged that all contributions from young people will be acknowledged in some way, through offering incentives, thanks, recognition, certification, accreditation or reward and also by demonstrating how contributions have influenced decisions and helped to make improvements to services.

Giving consideration to the ways in which you recognise and reward

This guidance underlines the importance of the “recognition” aspect for young people. There are also ideas for ways in which young people can be ‘rewarded,’ to encourage the development of skills and learning. An example is accreditation of participation activities or recognising how activities contribute towards education or coursework. This is valuable for a young person as skills learnt can be added onto their CV and can help with future career choices.

There occasions where ‘financial rewards’ such as shopping, cinema or other vouchers may be appropriate, for example: where a young person takes part in a recruitment interview panel for a new member of staff. It is important to consider all the recognition and reward routes, before considering ‘financial rewards.’

This guidance strongly recommends that young people should not have a financial reward given in ‘cash’ – instead, vouchers should be used - apart from reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses. This is in line with core principles of reward and recognition outlined below.

Financial rewards made to children and young people should be separately coded and identified in the services’ finance system. This allows for rewards to be monitored by service, so the ‘real cost’ of involvement is recognised by the service/organisation.

Some externally funded youth projects may sometimes set their own requirements for the ways in which young people will be recognised and rewarded for their involvement. It may be obligatory to follow their reward guidelines, and this should not act as a barrier to involvement.

Core principles

Equity – The use of incentives, recognition and reward should be equitable across services and not discriminate, directly or indirectly, against any individual or group of children or young people.

Inclusion – The service is encouraged to think through the inclusion of ‘seldom heard’ groups and levels of incentives and rewards may vary in some circumstances to engage with particular groups that is/are under-represented in a consultation or participation activity.

Good and timely communication – The levels of incentives, recognition and reward to be used will be clarified as far as possible in advance of the participation project/activity commencing and the timescale for giving recognition/rewards will be given to young people and parents/carers.

Reimbursement – Children and young people should ideally never be ‘out-of-pocket’ as a result of their involvement in activities. Personal expenses will be covered where possible including travel, food, childcare and accommodation (out-of-pocket expenses details follow in this guidance).

Giving time without payment and valuing volunteering – There is a balance between setting appropriate levels of recognition and reward and ‘over-recognising and rewarding’. It is always important to convey that the ‘core principle’ is to give time willingly and without remuneration, in addition to out-of-pocket expenses incurred. This defines voluntary activity, helping young people understand ‘charitable giving’ and ‘active citizenship’ volunteering principles.

Right level for age and abilities – Recognition and reward arrangements must be appropriate to the age of the child or young person involved. They must also suit the abilities and interests of the child or young person. For example, the perceived extra workload in some accredited learning may deter young people from being involved or staying involved.

What do we mean by using the terms ‘incentives’, ‘recognition’ and reward’?

Incentive - something that encourages involvement

- Out-of-pocket expenses covered such as transport or payment of travel expenses
- Provision of childcare; refreshments, phone and stationery costs
- Being listened to and influencing decisions; making new friends; having fun
- Having a competition and prize could be an incentive to get involved

Recognition - demonstrating that involvement is valued and appreciated

- Thank you, letters, references; certificates
- Gaining positive publicity and being quoted in publications
- Nominations for awards and receiving awards
- Celebration and award events
- Feedback on how views and ideas provided have helped to influence decisions and improve a service
- Achievements to be recorded.

Reward - giving something tangible that is of value to a young person

- Accreditation or qualification, locally or nationally to record learning; see pages 9 and 10 for details of accreditation/qualification routes and access to other developmental opportunities
- Going out for a meal
- Residential or day visit to an activity centre
- Tickets for an event; book, music, sports or shopping voucher; competitions and prizes

Activities

Activities that might be rewarded or recognised include:

- Taking part in a survey to find out the views of children and young people about a particular service
- Being on a steering group
- Being part of mystery shopping and inspections to find out how services are meeting the needs of children and young people
- Helping to improve the community and local facilities, such as by giving ideas for the improvement of a local park or being involved in decisions about activities planned in a youth provision
- Being on a commissioning or grant-giving committee
- Being a member of a service user group, which could also provide social activities and personal development opportunities such as the ‘Children in Care Council’, Young Carers’ Group or CAMHS consultation group
- Helping with a one-off activity such as a focus group, being part of a panel, or leading/co-facilitating training at an event
- Being involved in the recruitment and selection of staff and taking part in an interview panel
- Being a member of a local Youth Forum in one of the District Boroughs, on a Parish Councils, West Sussex Youth Cabinet, or UK Youth Parliament.

Types of activity, reward, expenses, training and learning for consideration

There is a range of ways in which children and young people may be involved in your service/organisation and many types of rewards that you can offer as thanks and recognition.

The table below helps to identify types of activity, from informing and consulting through to being involved and participating in decision-making. Services need to consider and agree the type of reward they decide to give, before any involvement of young people. It is advisable to involve children and young people in these discussions too, so that rewards and recognition are appropriate and meet expectations of those who will be involved. You will need to make your own local decisions and arrangements for this.

Type of Involvement	Recognition or Reward
<p>Informing Letting people know what is planned or has already been decided</p>	Expenses to specific invitees, or youth groups that attend via a youth worker/service, not to general public meetings
<p>Consulting Activity that enables involvement in decision making, offering opinions, listening to feedback at events</p>	<p>Expenses to specific invitees who have attended via a youth worker/service, not to general public meetings.</p> <p>Thank you letters and certification of attendance may be appropriate, giving feedback on what has happened as a result of listening.</p>
<p>Involving and Acting together</p> <p>Involve e.g. deciding together, encouraging additional ideas or options, seeking joint decisions, working in a regular participation group such as a Youth Forum, committee/steering group.</p> <p>Acting together, not only deciding jointly what to do, but actually doing it together 'in partnership.'</p>	<p>Expenses, recognition and reward.</p> <p>Mainly these groups/activities are where young people are engaged over a period of time and there is not any financial remuneration but more emphasis on training and personal development opportunities. This may be a one-off training session or longer courses and accreditation.</p> <p>Fun days out and residential visits are a great way to recognise and reward contributions young people have made.</p>
<p>Involvement in recruitment and focus groups Training is needed required for young people taking part in recruitment interviews on this role.</p> <p>Guidance on involving young people in staff recruitment is available from the Voice and Engagement Team.</p>	<p>This could include a financial reward such as a shopping voucher for a one-off activity such as a day's interview or a focus group.</p> <p>It would be recommended to give the equivalent in vouchers of £20 per 4-hour session or £30 to £40 for a day.</p>

Examples of participatory activities and recognition/reward offered

This table gives suggestions for recognition and reward for a range of activities that young people get involved in. It is for guidance, as local decisions are needed about the most appropriate range and level against activity:

Activity 1 – Informing 2 – Consulting 3 – Involving and acting together 4 – Recruitment and focus groups	Recognition or Reward offered
Public meeting 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledgement through thanks/recognition • Commitment to feedback
Roadshow 1 or 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledgement through thanks/recognition • Commitment to feedback
Completion of surveys 1 or 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledgement through thanks/recognition • Commitment to feedback
Stakeholder event 1 or 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thanks/recognition, expenses • Commitment to feedback
Seminar or workshop 1 or 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thanks/recognition, expenses • Commitment to feedback
Judging or discussion panels at conferences/events 2 or 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thanks/recognition, expenses • Commitment to feedback
Taking part in training and attending interviews to recruit staff 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition through thanks/ certification/ accreditation • Expenses & reward, including a financial reward such as a shopping voucher would be recommended – £20 per 4 hour session • Commitment to feedback
Participation in a focus group 2 and 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expenses and recognition through thanks/certification • Financial reward may be considered e.g. a shopping voucher of £20 per 4 hour session • Commitment to feedback
Committee/board decision-making group such as CiCC, Youth Forum, or Youth Cabinet 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expenses and recognition through thanks/ certification • Reward such as training and accreditation to develop personal skills and abilities • Commitment to feedback
Acting as Youth Inspector/mystery shopper 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expenses and recognition through thanks/ certification • Reward such as training and accreditation to develop personal skills and abilities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial reward may be appropriate to consider, • e.g. shopping voucher • Commitment to feedback
Involvement on allocating grants/ tendering/ commissioning panel 3 to develop personal skills and abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expenses and recognition through thanks/ certification • Reward such as training and accreditation • Commitment to feedback

Out-of-pocket expenses

Children and young people who participate should ideally not lose out or be financially disadvantaged as a result of their involvement in the activities. Services need to be clear about funds/support available, or whether this responsibility is with parents/carers. Services need to make accessible arrangements for them/their parents/carers to be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses as outlined below. Timescale for out-of-pocket expenses to be reimbursed should be agreed in advance, so the young person/parent or carer knows how long it will take to be reimbursed.

Travel

Services will need to agree beforehand whether the young person will be reimbursed for their travel to an activity, meeting etc, and to communicate this clearly with the young person and their parents/carers.

The following travel costs may be reimbursed:

- Return trip from home (or place of work/educational establishment) to the activity venue on public transport e.g. bus, train where supported by receipts
- Return trip from home (or place of work/educational establishment) to the activity venue in private car, motorcycle, other motorized vehicle or pedal cycle at the rates shown in the table
- Parking costs for the duration of the activity, where parking is not provided free of charge
- Where possible the young person should be reimbursed on the day of travel via petty cash, once a travel receipt has been provided
- Some organizations choose to issue travel warrants to young people if they are travelling by train.

Mileage rates reimbursed

Type of vehicle	Rate per mile
Private car	36.9p
Motorcycle (or other motorized vehicle)	24p
Pedal cycle (or other non-motorized vehicle)	20p

Travel arrangements

In general, it is the responsibility of parents and carers to make transport arrangements. WSCC Staff can transport young people in cars that are insured for business use, with prior agreement and written consent from parent/carers, and a buddy system in place if traveling unaccompanied. If the circumstances are exceptional and/or where there is no public transport available, and where previously agreed and a receipt is provided, a taxi can be provided.

Reimbursement of taxi costs

Taxis can be reimbursed in exceptional circumstances with prior agreement from the service/organiser, if a taxi is required for medical reasons or because it is impractical to use an alternative form of transport. A list of taxi companies that are on the County Council framework is available from the Voice and Engagement team. These companies have DBS-checked drivers and have met quality standards for licensing and insurance.

Parents/carers must give their permission in writing for a young person under the age of 16 to travel unaccompanied. This includes an agreement that the young person is their responsibility during this journey.

Reimbursement of cost of meals/subsistence

Organisers of any involvement activity should arrange for healthy refreshments to be provided, free of charge, to children/young people attending meetings and events. This may include lunch where activities take place over lunchtime.

In some situations, children and young people may be able to claim for the cost of a meal where they meet all of the following criteria:

- absent from home and more than five miles from their home;
- away from their home for more than five hours;
- period of absence covers the whole of the normal lunchtime period of 12 noon to 2pm;
- necessarily spent more on meals than would have been spent had they not attended the involvement activity; and
- lunch was not provided free of charge at the activity/event/meeting.

Reimbursement of care costs

With prior agreement from the manager of the activity, the following care costs can be paid:

Childcare: Payment of up to £5 per hour per child for registered childcare will be reimbursed where supported by receipts. The amount paid cannot exceed the amount receipted. Registered childcare includes nurseries, childminders, play schools and nannies, but does not include payments to a service user's or carer's friends or family.

Dependent care: Where a carer needs to employ a registered care agency to look after their dependent while attending an involvement activity.

Support workers: Where a young person needs the help of a personal assistant or support worker to fully engage with the activity, these support costs can be reimbursed at the usual rate. The exact arrangements need to be discussed and agreed in advance.

A young parent can only claim for care costs that are higher than those they would normally incur – e.g. if the child would normally have been in childcare when the meeting takes place, no claim may be made. Payments for care costs may be regarded as taxable income by the Inland Revenue.

Where a participant needs the support of another individual to enable them to attend a meeting or activity then the carer or personal assistant in this situation may be entitled to their care costs being paid by cash or voucher for the time they are working. This must be agreed in advance and any payment received must be declared to the relevant tax and benefits authorities by the person receiving the payment.

Overnight stay expenses

Children and young people may sometimes be invited to attend a conference or other event that involves an overnight stay. In such cases they may be eligible for reimbursement of additional expenses if this has not been paid by the organiser before the conference. These will be reimbursed in line with the expenses guidelines that apply to staff and can include:

- An allowance for overnight accommodation where this has not been arranged by the organisation
- An evening meal allowance, where meals are not provided and/or paid for by the organisation
- Additional receipted expenses incurred wholly and necessarily as a result of the overnight stay
- Other minor expenses may also be reimbursed, if agreed in advance and evidence of expenditure is provided, e.g. photocopying, stationery, printer cartridges, stamps, telephone calls etc
- Expenses to cover translation, interpretation and provision of equipment such as a hearing loop will normally be covered directly by the organisation arranging the activity. It is advised that CYPT services have a claim form to account for these costs and receipts must be provided.

Advice to young people claiming benefits

Informing benefits advisers, it is compulsory for young people on benefits to notify benefits advisers that they are involved in a voluntary capacity. They must also inform them about any monetary payments and payments in kind, such as vouchers and expenses that they have received as a result of participating or volunteering in a service. It is important that youth workers/organisers give young people support in this as it can be confusing, and some people may worry about declaring they are volunteering.

Young people will have to complete a form describing what they do (currently known as form ES672VJP). Organisations have no legal duty to inform the Jobcentre Plus or benefits office about who is volunteering for them, so it is the responsibility of the volunteer to do this.

The provision of financial rewards such as vouchers, tokens, gifts etc (over and above out-of-pocket expenses) will be regarded as taxable. Offering a shopping voucher to an individual may have an impact on benefits. It is possible to interpret the offer of payment as 'notional earnings'. It is therefore important to establish with the relevant Jobcentre Plus the principles of participation and explain that the voucher, for example, is in recognition and thanks for their participation in a voluntary activity. It is also important to note that the benefit system will treat 'rounded up' expenses as earnings i.e. you need to reimburse expenses exactly as the receipt states.

Weekly limits for income for people on benefits are set. If the payment is above this rate, but involvement is intermittent, it is possible to make payments in arrears over a longer time period and average the payment over that time period. Where this is likely to occur, payments could be made over a calendar month. This will help the young person avoid paying tax on the gift or benefit received. Further advice and information can be obtained from Jobcentre Plus.

Individuals undertaking voluntary activities are not in paid employment whilst doing so, and there is no employment relationship or contract of employment between the parties.

Individuals undertaking activity under 'Involvement Type 4' and who participate in regular paid activity (without having the status of being an employee) have certain legal rights, including rights under the Working Time Regulations 1998 and the National Minimum Wage Act 1998.

Individuals undertaking some of the activity under 'Type 4' (on page 10) on a self-employed basis are personally responsible for making payment of any tax and National Insurance due on the income received.

Individuals undertaking some of the activity under ‘Type 4’ (on page 10) other than on a self-employed basis will have tax and National Insurance contributions deducted at source as may be required by law and HM Revenue & Customs.

Accreditation/Qualification/Certification

Accreditation is an effective way to recognise young people’s learning and skills development in an engagement/participation process or activity.

ASDAN: ASDAN is a charitable social enterprise with Awarding Body status, providing courses to more than 6,000 schools, colleges, training providers and youth centres across the UK and beyond. ASDAN’s Award programmes and Qualifications offer flexible ways to accredit personal and social education, skills development and enrichment activities, mainly for the 11-25 age group. Please see www.asdan.org.uk

NOCN: National Open College Network (NOCN) is the leading credit-based Awarding Body in the UK, offering high quality, flexible, credit-based qualifications and is accredited by the Regulatory Authorities in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Please see www.nocn.org.uk

Act by Right: Act by Right is a skills workbook, developed with young people and accredited by ASDAN. It takes children and young people through five stages of a journey to develop their knowledge and skills to take effective action and make change happen. It is rooted in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is the international human rights framework that promotes the full participation of children and young people to help secure their rights to a fulfilling, safe and secure upbringing. Please see <http://www.nya.org.uk/quality/act-by-right>

Children’s/Youth Achievement Awards: The Youth Challenges and the Youth and Junior Achievement Awards are an activity-based approach to peer education. The Awards are designed to help develop more effective participative practice by encouraging young people to progressively take more responsibility in selecting, planning and leading activities that are based on their interests. The peer group model encourages the development of a wide range of life skills through a flexible and informal approach.

Please see <http://www.ukyouth.org/whatwedo/Programmes/YAA>

Volunteering Hours through vinspired.com: V, the national young volunteers service, is an independent charity dedicated to helping young people volunteer in ways that matter to them. Please see <http://vinspired.com>

This Guidance is informed by:

‘Guidance for the recognition and reward of participation activities,’ Office of the Children’s’ Commissioner

‘Recognition and Reward Guidance for Children and Young People,’ East Sussex County Council

For more information please contact the Voice and Participation Team, WSCC Early Help Service

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