# SECTION 17 POLICY FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

**1. Section 17 Background**

* 1. **What is Section 17?**

Financial support in terms of goods or services can be offered to children, young people and parents/ carers under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 to address identified needs;

Section 17 (1) says it shall be the general duty of every local authority to

* + 1. To safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need; and
    2. so far is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families,

by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children’s needs.

Section 17 (6) says the service provided by a local authority in the exercise of functions conferred on them by this section may include providing accommodation and giving assistance in kind or in cash.

Section 17 (7) says assistance may be unconditional or subject to conditions, as to the repayment of the assistance or of its value (in whole or in part).

Section 17 (8) says before giving any assistance or imposing any conditions, a local authority shall have regard to the means of the child concerned and of each of his parents.

Section 17 (9) say no person shall be liable to make any repayments of assistance or of its value at any time when he is in receipt of universal credit (1except in such circumstances as may be prescribed)

1. section 17 (9) (provision of services to children in need, their families and other);
2. section 17 A (5)(b) (direct payments);
3. section 29 (3) and (3A) (recoupment of cost of providing services etc);
4. paragraph 21 (4) of Schedule 2 (local authority support for children and families).

of income support under Part VII of the Social Security Contributions and Benefit Act 1992, or any entitlement of child tax credit other than the family element, of working tax credit, of an income- based jobseeker’s allowance or of an income-related employment and support allowance.1 Welfare Reform Act 2012 (c.5), s.150 (3) Sch2 para.1(a) S.I2013/983,ART.3(1)(B) (I)Where there are repeated applications for S17 support, an additional needs-led assessment will be undertaken to ensure that the child / young person is receiving the most appropriate level of support.

The definition of a child in need is:

* S/he is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of services by a local authority under this Part.
* His/her health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision of such services; or
* S/he is disabled,
* And “family”, in relation to such a child, includes any person who has parental responsibility

for the child and any other person with whom s/he has been living.

Therefore, for a child to be supported using S17 payments, they **MUST** be open to Children's Social Care or at the very least be an open referral for an assessment.

Although when a child becomes cared for by the local authority they are also a child in need, S17 monies should not be accessed to pay for items associated with being a cared for child. Any such costs eg activities, direct work, travel expenses to support contact etc. should be allocated to the appropriate children we care for budget code. Costs for placements should always be allocated to the appropriate placement budget code, in accordance with the placement type.

# Criteria of Section 17

The Local Authority does not replace the role of benefit support. Families can be referred to Welfare Rights, if necessary.

All alternatives must be explored with the family before assistance is offered under S17. This must include the consideration of obtaining assistance – or part assistance from other agencies, including;

* Universal Credit.
* Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit (including help with childcare costs).
* Guardian's Allowance for people caring for bereaved children.
* Housing Benefit and/or discretionary housing payments.
* Council Tax benefit and discounts.
* National Insurance contribution-based benefits (such as Maternity Allowance, New Style Jobseeker’s allowance (JSA), New Style Employment Support Allowance (ESA), Bereavement Benefits, Basic State Pension and New Style State Pension)
* Non-contributory benefits (such as Universal Credit, Child Benefit, Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment, Guardian’s Allowance, Industrial Injuries benefits and Carers Allowance.
* [Warm Home Discount Scheme](https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme)
* The appeal and review systems of all of the above.

For more detailed information, families should be directed to the Citizen's Advice Bureau. [https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/help-if-on-a-low-income/extra-help-if-youre-on-](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/help-if-on-a-low-income/extra-help-if-youre-on-benefits-or-your-benefits-have-stopped/) [benefits-or-your-benefits-have-stopped/](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/help-if-on-a-low-income/extra-help-if-youre-on-benefits-or-your-benefits-have-stopped/)

* Families can be supported to contact their nearest Family Hub. West Sussex County Council has made some funding available through the Family Hubs to support ‘families’ in crisis. A ‘family’ is deemed to exist where at least one parent is residing with at least one son or daughter aged 18 years or younger and aged 25 and under if they have special needs. There are stringent checks applied by the Children and Family Centres before any direct support is offered. This will look at verification of identity and financial circumstance*.* Help will take the form of issuing foodbank vouchers or food parcels, gas and electric top-ups, emergency travel and clothing. It should be noted that the support is completely discretionary and there is no automatic entitlement by anyone. Family Hubs will also advise on other organisations who may be able to assist with white goods and furniture needs.

For Housing Support, including assistance with landlord disputes or housing needs, it is recommended to contact the local Housing Options Teams around the County. The [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/13/contents) introduced a duty on specified public authorities to include Children’s Services to refer service users who are defined as being homeless or threatened with homelessness where they are likely to become homeless within 56 days. [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-duty-to-](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-duty-to-refer/a-guide-to-the-duty-to-refer) [refer/a-guide-to-the-duty-to-refer](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-duty-to-refer/a-guide-to-the-duty-to-refer)

In addition to the services referred to above, there are a wide range of voluntary and community organisations across the county. Signposting families to these services and providing support where appropriate can provide more localised and relevant support. The local Early Help Hub will help with signposting to these services.

Financial assistance under S17, as far as possible, should be a minimal payment to support parents to meet the needs of their children until the next working day, when it is then expected that they will resolve any benefit issue. There may be exceptional circumstances where multiple payments are required; these are to be considered on a case-by-case basis by a Head of Service and must be subject to review and time limited. This must be clearly communicated by the worker to the person in receipt of the assistance. The person in receipt of the monies must be aware that the funding will be under constant review. All S17 payments should be supported by an assessment of need. If there are multiple applications for S17 financial assistance, then other resources such as support with budgeting and money management must be accessed.

The use of S17 monies **MUST** be the final option. In particular, the allocation of cash should only be made in exceptional circumstances and all other alternatives such as benefits, and crisis funds **MUST** be explored and evidenced. No person shall be liable to make any repayment of assistance at any time when s/he is in receipt of any of the following: Part VII of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992.

* Income support
* Any element of Child Tax Credit other than the family element
* Working Tax Credit
* Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
* Income-related Employment and Support Allowance

# What can Section 17 payments be used for?

* To support children in need (or in need of protection) who are at home (and WSCC do not share parental responsibility).
* To prevent family breakdown or admission to care. **This would not include paying others to**

**’care’ for the child as this would constitute facilitating a placement and the child should be considered a child cared for by the local authority.**

Specific details in relation to how Section 17 can be administered, can be found in the S17 Guidance document at the end of the policy. This includes:

* How funds can be utilised
* Appropriate funding limits for various items/ needs
* Approval levels (not related to Scheme of Delegation)
* Method of payment
* Coding of expenditure

If specialist assessments or therapy are required, this must be informed by an assessment, it must clearly state the required outcomes and **must** be agreed by the responsible Head of Service.

# What Section 17 payments cannot be used for?

The use of S17 is not intended to replace the benefits system and should not be used to improve standards of living related to living on benefits. Families who repeatedly require S17 financial assistance must be supported to access courses/support to help them to be able to support themselves within their means.

Legal Costs – these are costed and coded to the legal department.

# Summary of Section 17 payments

Underlying principles:

* Families are to be enabled to resolve financial crisis through their own means wherever possible.
* All other options to support a family **must** be sought first and evidenced that this has been done. This includes accessing charitable organisations and referring to local West Sussex County Council run Children and Family Centres.
* Any Section 17 monies spent **must** be informed by an assessment of need, unless in exceptional circumstances of an absolute emergency, when financial support might be given prior to an assessment. This must be a minimal amount and followed up with an assessment of individual circumstances.
* The local authority is not a benefits agency or an alternative to the benefits system, entitlement to benefits can be established by contacting the Citizen's Advice Bureau.
* Any payments that are not one offs must have regular reviews planned with the Service Manager and dependent on the level of cost, the Head of Service. This should be on a weekly basis, with 3 months is the longest period permissible between reviews. Any payment extending beyond 3 months requires Head of Service sign off and review.
* Payments can only be provided where an assessment determines items identified as essential to meet the needs of the child, prevents the child suffering significant harm or to meet significant need or prevents the need for the child to be looked after by the local authority.

It should be checked if S17 payments have already been made to the family in the last 12 months. If there have been 3 or more payments, the Head of Service must give approval. This will trigger a reassessment of need.

# Money can only be given to clients only after all other options have been explored and verified, and cash in the form of a prepaid card can only be used where it is not possible to pay money directly into a bank account using a payment requisition or payment plan.

Further detailed guidance on the range of items/ situations that Section 17 payments can/ cannot be used for are found below, from page 6.

**2. Section 17 Financial Assistance Guidance**

* 1. **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)

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

# N.B. Social Workers 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

# 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. This is available under Key Documents on tri.x.

* Each payment should have the agreement of an authorising officer and the approval of a certifying officer.
* All the following should be considered by the social worker 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 section 17 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.
  1. **Coding and reporting of expenditure Subjective coding – General Ledger (GL) codes**

Please refer to Appendix 2 at the end of this policy for guidance on which GL codes should be used when making purchases that are covered by this policy. 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.

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 –** 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** | **S17 Cost Centre** |
| MASH | JK51 |
| FST-Western | JN15 |
| FST-Central | JN16 |
| FST-Eastern | JN19 |
| Emergency Duty Team | JK71 |
| Lifelong Services | JF59 |
| Specialist Adolescent Services | JF65 |
| Children Looked After | JF60 |
| Fostering & Adoption | JF90 |
| Child Asylum Team | JB50 |
| Public Law Outline | JK94 |

**3. Types of S17 Financial Assistance**

* 1. **S17 Non-Accommodation**

These should be used to overcome a crisis, following the best assessment that can be achieved in the circumstances:

# Specific Guidance: Provisions / Personal Items (Family Support); Provisions / Personal items

**Food** – Consideration should be given to use of local Food Banks or applying for support through other schemes. **Food banks –** see attached information for locality information including foodbanks. Vouchers for families with children are issued by several organisations including schools. West Sussex Family Hubs will issue food bank vouchers where foodbanks operate in their locality or food parcels where there are no foodbanks.

**Gas and Electricity** – Fuel Top-Up Vouchers can be issued to families in crisis through the West Sussex Family Hubs. In order to save money on utility bills, individuals or families are encouraged to seek advice on saving fuel from the [www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk](http://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/) or at [www.thameswater.co.uk](http://www.thameswater.co.uk/) who may be able to offer FREE water saving devices.

**Energy supply companies will all have arrangements to support customers who are experiencing difficulties in paying for fuel. Customers should contact their supplier directly or via their websites to apply. Help can also be sought from the following link-** [https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy/energy-supply/get-help-paying-your-](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy/energy-supply/get-help-paying-your-bills/grants-and-benefits-to-help-you-pay-your-energy-bills/) [bills/grants-and-benefits-to-help-you-pay-your-energy-bills/](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy/energy-supply/get-help-paying-your-bills/grants-and-benefits-to-help-you-pay-your-energy-bills/)

* **Clothing -** one off payment, the provision of clothing, can only be provided where an assessment determines the items as essential. These are to be minimal amounts to meet essential basics.

# School uniforms

* + 1. If school uniform is required immediately not giving the family an opportunity to budget through regular benefit or subsistence payments to afford this.
    2. If the family has more than one child in secondary school and cannot afford uniform costs for the second or subsequent children.

Clothing needs should be discussed in the first instance with the school to see what support they are able to offer. However, if agreed, then any purchase should be made directly by the Social Worker (or Family Housing Support Worker for NRPF families) with the school uniform supplier.

Funding via Payment Requisition or Prepaid Card to the family member for costs of goods only, and receipts are to be provided. Social Workers can also buy goods for customers using their P- Cards.

**Toiletries -** Funding via Payment Requisition or Prepaid Card to the worker or parent /carer for costs of goods only, and to meet basic needs.

* **Nappies and baby milk** should be given in appropriate amounts. Funding is direct to worker or parent /carer via Payment Requisition or Prepaid Card for costs of goods only. Liaison with health should take place in the first instance as they may be better placed to provide this support.
* **White Goods (appliance purchase)-** grants should be applied for in the first instance- [www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk/)
* **Official Documents** – For official documents:
* Birth certificates for customers born in West Sussex can be obtained via an [online form](http://theintranet.westsussex.gov.uk/HelpMe/Pages/helpmecontent.aspx?module=wscc&topic=registration-service&k=How%20do%20I%20request%20a%20copy%20certificate%3F&entryid=copy-certificate) available on the point. There should be no charge for requests made by Children’s Services.
* Birth certificates for customers born outside of West Sussex (maximum of 2 copies) may be ordered on-line using a P-Card.
* **Equipment** can only be provided where an assessment determines items identified as essential to meet the needs of the child and/or prevent the child suffering significant harm or significant need and/or the need for the child to be looked after by the local authority. Where possible, the social worker or support staff will place an order to a supplier on behalf of the young person/ family and pay via a Purchase Order or Payment Requisition otherwise a corporate Credit Card (P-Card) can be used. A receipt is required.
* **Direct work** – As part of ongoing family support work, e.g. Life Story work materials. Funding direct to a worker via Payment Requisition or Prepaid Card for the cost of the goods. A receipt must be provided and uploaded on the child's file on Mosaic.
* **Awaiting Benefits** When a service user requests financial assistance because of a failure of arrival of benefits or tax credits only a Minimum Daily Allowance may be paid. Full benefits will be paid retrospectively by the DWP. When a child goes to live with a different parent, friend or family member under a family arrangement, they should be contacting the relevant benefit department and setting up the claim (as this can take up to 6 weeks).

# Universal Credit- New Claimants

Those moving from the legacy benefits to UC will receive a two-week run on of legacy benefits which will be paid in addition to the UC due for the same period.

A ‘Universal Credit advance’ is generally available to anyone making a new claim for Universal Credit. An advance of Universal Credit is an interest free loan from the Department of Work and Pension (DWP) and will be **recovered** through deductions from the ongoing claim. **In most cases i**t will be

**recovered over** a **12**-**month** period so should be applied for with caution to prevent future hardship. Advances will usually be granted if:

1. There is at least a 5 week wait for the first universal credit payment.
2. If money is needed for basics like food, rent or fuel during this time.

# Universal Credit- Existing Claimants

Those in receipt of Universal Credit for 6 months or more may be able to apply for a 'Budgeting Advance'. However, this cannot be applied for if previous applications have been made, that have not been recovered.

Proof that an application for either a Universal Credit Advance or a Budgeting Advance has been applied for must be provided before S.17 assistance can be offered.

Please note that benefits will be backdated and financial support from West Sussex County Council will not be reclaimed, therefore the amount given **must** be informed by an assessment and based upon the actual amount required to meet immediate need, such as; food, bus fare to essential appointments and getting to school etc. Where a payment to cover the immediate 5 days is made it should, where possible, be made direct to the customers bank account via Payment Requisition.

If there are issues with benefits, parents/ carers should be referred to the Citizens Advice Bureau for advice.

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/>

# Denied benefits

In West Sussex there is a small number of people who have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) who consider themselves “destitute”. No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) is an immigration condition which restricts families and individuals’ access to public funds which includes many mainstream benefits such as housing and welfare under Section 115 of the Immigration Act 1999.

As a result of these restrictions, individuals and families may have a right to financial support consisting of (accommodation and subsistence payments) from social services to meet the assessed needs of any child and or children (under section 17 of the Children Act 1989) or because of complex health needs (under the Care Act 2014). In these cases, the local authority has a duty to support the accommodation and subsistence costs of residents with NRPF in the County. NB Subsistence rates are subject to change.

For NRPF families follow below guidance and liaise with the Accommodation Team. NRPF Guidance

NRPF Subsistence Guidance

For EEA families coming for support, it is recommended to refer to Welfare Rights for advice.

Children's Services is not fundamentally a long-term income maintenance agency and whilst interim arrangements can be made, these need to be time limited wherever possible.

# Contact/ Travel Support (Family Support)

This provision is available to support the transport of children, parents, or carers to attend:

* assessments
* activities
* appointments, including attendance at a child protection conference
* support groups and courses

Which are essential to a Child's Plan or to comply with court direction.

It also includes the provision of an escort if it is necessary to enable a child to get to school or nursery whilst the parent/carer has a temporary disability, once all other options regarding friends and family have been exhausted.

If the transport is for travel to and from school the school transport team should be contacted first.

* An assessment must ensure and agree that they could not reasonably be expected to travel using their own means due to medical, situational, financial or geographical reasons. This support is to be provided through bus tickets, train tickets or reimbursement of own, family or friend's petrol costs.
* Reimbursement is made to the person through a Prepaid Card or payment requisition. Reimbursement of petrol costs to be subject to driver and vehicle being appropriately licensed and insured. The rates of payment for fuel has to be based upon average miles per gallon for the vehicle used for an agreed distance between home to meeting, the cost identified to be agreed prior to submission for approval. For guidance on the reimbursement rates for petrol costs, please refer to [**HM Revenues and Customs Guidance**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advisory-fuel-rates).
* Taxis are not the first option to be explored and will not be approved unless all other avenues of travel have been exhausted and the cost of travel has been evaluated against the benefits to the child of the appointment, or it is cheaper by taxi.

# Childcare / Activities

* **Childcare** - **Day Care** e.g. childminders or nursery for children under 2 years old, this should be only in the short term, in exceptional circumstances, and assessed as an absolute necessity to promote the welfare of a child. If the child is 2 years old then an application **must** made through Early Education Premium (EEP) for 15 hours free nursery and for 3 years onwards 30 hours.

If additional hours are agreed as being required, payment should be made only on receipt of an invoice.

The funding is available from the term after a child's 2nd birthday, providing they meet the prescribed eligibility criteria:

* + Children looked after
  + 'Child in Need' status
  + Those on a Child Protection Plan
  + Children of Gypsy Roma Traveller heritage
  + Children receiving portage
  + Children of serving armed forces personnel residing in West Sussex

For further details and how to apply;

# Information for parents

[https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/education-children-and-families/childcare-and-early-](https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/education-children-and-families/childcare-and-early-education/free-childcare-for-2-year-olds/) [education/free-childcare-for-2-year-olds/](https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/education-children-and-families/childcare-and-early-education/free-childcare-for-2-year-olds/)

Parents/ carers receiving Working Tax Credit or Universal Credit can request financial support towards childcare costs from their local benefit office. West Sussex County Council should only pay the difference between what the benefits cover and the actual cost. This ensures that the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) fund childcare costs, wherever possible.

* **After school and holiday activities** – if they are part of a Child Protection Plan, or prevent the need for accommodation as part of planned intervention that is informed by an assessment. Payment on receipt of an invoice by the supplier.
* **Holidays** - Holidays must only be provided in exceptional circumstances and the child must meet the threshold under The Chronically and Sick Disabled Act 1970.
* **Support temporary private care arrangements** e.g. when a parent may be hospitalised and there is no other means of caring for the child. The arrangement and financial responsibility lies with the child’s family. At the very least, the parent should be expected to provide the person caring for the child with the child benefit received for that child. Any Section 17 payment should be informed by an assessment, the person caring must be assessed as viable and, based on actual cost, this will be funded through prepaid card or payment requisition and would only be paid to the parent, not direct to the carer.

# Professional Fees (Family Support); Therapeutic support (one off)

* **Specialists Assessments and DNA/Hair Strand Testing** - If special assessments or testing is required prior to care proceedings (pre proceedings public law outline) to evidence the level of risk to a child, then these assessments need to be agreed by the Head of Service. Specialist assessments should be the exception rather than usual practice. If the Social Worker and Team Manager are of the view that a specialist assessment may be required and this is supported by the Service Manager, approval from the Head of Service is to be sought before the pre-proceedings meeting and ratified thereafter by the relevant Head of Service. An invoice will be provided and paid using a purchase order.
* **Interpreter and Translation Costs** - Where English is not the first language for children and carers; workers need to ascertain if the child and/or carer is able to understand and speak English to the level that they can complete their intervention in a meaningful way. If the child and/or carer is not able to understand or speak English to the required level, then an interpreter will be required.

Consideration is to be given to whether this could be an extended family member, family friend or community worker, including teaching staff with the carers' permission if it will not be detrimental to any assessment and/or the intervention. Professional Interpreters should always be used for assessments, Child Protection Conferences, and court proceedings. These can be sourced through the existing interpreter’s contract. An invoice is raised and paid via a purchase order.

# Accommodation - Furnishings (Family Support)

* **Furniture, bedding** or **safety equipment** can only be provided under S17 where an assessment determines items identified as essential to meet the needs of the child and/or to prevent the child suffering significant harm or significant need and/or the need for the child to be looked after by the local authority.

Access to community resources should also be considered. Liaison with the benefits agency, advice agencies and charitable organisations locally that can be accessed, and specific grants should be sought. Either second hand or the least expensive suitable model available should be purchased.

If the supplier can provide an invoice, these should be paid via a Purchase Order and paid via OWTB. If not, a corporate RBS P-Card should be used, and a receipt obtained.

# Accommodation - Housing Costs (Family Support); S17 Deposit/ Rent

For families experiencing housing difficulties in the first instance a check should be made to see if parent/carers are being supported by the local district or borough council to prevent their homelessness. If a parent/carer is homeless or threatened with homeless within 56 days, then a duty to refer should be completed and sent to the local district or borough council.

* **Support to intentionally homeless families** - Refer to Children's Social Care to undertake a Child and Family Assessment.

# Guarantors

Legally West Sussex cannot act as rent guarantor for individuals and this will not be agreed under any circumstances.

# Affordability

If the family cannot afford the rent in the area of their choice, they may need to re-locate to an area of West Sussex or beyond that is within their means.

Any issues with progressing tenancies for service users because of this veto should be brought to the attention of the relevant Head of Service and other options considered.

Before providing financial support Children’s Services jointly with the Accommodation Team should be satisfied through assessment of the following:

* + 1. It can be clearly demonstrated that this prevents a child being looked after, or, where it facilitates the child looked after to return home.
    2. The Parent/Carer are not owed any further housing duty by the District or Borough Council under the homeless legislation.
    3. It has been clearly demonstrated the parent/carer has no alternative accommodation for their child(ren) which is reasonable for their occupation.
    4. They do not have money or assets which could be used to secure accommodation for their child(ren)
    5. All barriers to securing housing have been explored through housing and affordability assessments completed by the Accommodation Team.

**Deposits**

A **loan/grant** of *deposit* equal to 5 weeks' rent can be considered. The landlord must put the deposit in a government-backed tenancy deposit scheme (TDP). (Deposit) and West Sussex County Council

will be registered as interested party until the loan is repaid by the parent/carer. The deposit will a loan accept in exceptional circumstances when the deposit will be provided as a grant (such as for NRPF families.)

Rent in Advance

Rent in advance may be offered as a loan/grant of one, three or six months maximum where it is evidenced through assessment this will relieve the children’s homelessness and all other options have been exhausted. This offer is made to promote the welfare of the child(ren) and to ensure they child(ren) have suitable accommodation available for their occupation for at least 6 months. The onus is on the parent/carer to ensure they provide all requested information to be considered as part of the affordability calculations and assessment and seek accommodation.

* **Support to 16/ 17 homeless young people**- Staff should refer to Joint Housing Protocol for Homeless 16/17 Year Olds. [https://proceduresonline.com/trixcms1/media/5134/homeless- young-people-policy.pdf](https://proceduresonline.com/trixcms1/media/5134/homeless-young-people-policy.pdf)
* Rental payments for families with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)- Refer to Children’s

Social Care to undertake a Child and Family Assessment.

These cases must be carefully assessed, both in social work and financial terms, and authorised by the relevant Head of Service before being progressed.

Young people being accommodated under Section 20 and accommodation costs for Care Leavers should NOT be recorded as S17:

Young people being accommodated under S20 - accommodation costs should be coded to the Children we care for budget.

* Care Leavers - accommodation costs should be coded to the Care Leaver Budget.

# Accommodation readiness (Family Support)

* The supplier must provide an invoice which can be matched against a purchase order.

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| --- | --- |
| **Review / Contacts / References** |  |
| Document title: | Section 17 policy for Children’s Social Care |
| Date approved: | 10 September 2020 |
| Approving body: | Policy & Practice and QA Steering Group  and SLT |
| Last review date: | March 2022 |
| Next review date: | March 2023 |
| Related internal policies, procedures, guidance: | Families with No Recourse to Public Funds  Homeless young people policy Intentionally homeless policy |
| Document owner: | Assistant Director Early Help and Children’s Social Care |
| Lead contact / author: | Jenny Boyd |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Expenditure type | Expenditure category | Method of providing assistance | Preferred Method of Payment | Alternative  Method of Payment | Maximum amounts |
| Food | S17 Non-Accommodation  / Provisions / Personal Items | Food Banks / Children and Family Centres. | Food Voucher | Payment Requisition or Prepaid Card | £5 per day |
| Gas and Electric | Children and Family Centres. | Payment Requisition to Carer | Payment  Requisition or Prepaid Card | £15 for 3 days / £20 for up to a week |
| Clothing | Children and Family Centres. | Payment Requisition to Carer | Payment Requisition or Prepaid Card |  |
| Toiletries | Children and Family Centres. | Payment Requisition to Carer | Payment Requisition or Prepaid Card | £5.00 a week |
| Nappies and Baby Milk | Children and Family Centres. | Payment Requisition to Carer | Payment Requisition or  Prepaid Card | £15.00 a week |
| Equipment e.g. washing machine | Application for a grant should be tried in the first instance. Only ever provided when evidenced by social work assessment and non-provision of equipment would result in significant harm or serious impact on  welfare and that | Invoice/PO’s | P-Card | Minimal assistance to be provided to support family anything over £100.00 to be agreed by Service Manager. |

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| Expenditure type | Expenditure category | Method of providing assistance | Preferred Method of Payment | Alternative  Method of Payment | Maximum amounts |
|  |  | applications to charities have been  unsuccessful. |  |  |  |
| Direct Work | Evidenced by social work assessment. Utilise internal/community and universal resources wherever  possible. | Payment Requisition to Worker | Payment Requisition or Prepaid Card | Ongoing finance to be agreed and reviewed by Team Managers. Service Manager approval required if in excess of £100.00 a year. |
| Awaiting Benefits | Claim for an advancement through the job centre work coach. | Invoice Plan | Payment Requisition or Prepaid Card | Minimal daily allowance as recorded above – full benefits are not to be provided; they are paid in retrospect by DWP. |
|  | In exceptional circumstances, i.e. no recourse to public funds – follow guidance. |  |  |  |
| Denied Benefits | Only ever paid following an assessment of need and financial circumstances  and when all other options have been | Invoice Plan | Payment Requisition or Prepaid Card | Agreement by Head of Service |

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| Expenditure type | Expenditure category | Method of providing assistance | Preferred Method of Payment | Alternative  Method of Payment | Maximum amounts |
|  |  | exhausted and  evidenced. |  |  |  |
| To assessments  / appointments | S17 Non-  Accommodation  / Contact / Travel Support | Public transport should be the first option | Travel Portal to buy ticket on behalf of family. | Payment Requisition or Prepaid Card | 12p per mile.  Different fuel rates apply for vehicles above 1400cc. |
|  | Families must be enabled to use their own resources such as family and friends. |  |  |  | [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advisory-](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advisory-fuel-rates) [fuel-rates](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advisory-fuel-rates)  (Same rates apply).  In the case of an individual having a larger engine size, WSCC will pay 12p per mile and the remaining costs must be met by the individual. |
| To School |  | School Transport team | Travel Portal to buy ticket on behalf of family. | Payment Requisition or Invoice Plan to family member | 12p per mile. |
| Maintain Contact |  |  | Travel Portal to buy ticket on behalf of family. | Payment Requisition or Invoice Plan to  family member | 12p per mile. |
| Activities / support groups |  |  | Travel Portal to  buy ticket on behalf of family. | Payment Requisition or | 12p per mile. |

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| Expenditure type | Expenditure category | Method of providing assistance | Preferred Method of Payment | Alternative  Method of Payment | Maximum amounts |
|  |  |  |  | Invoice Plan to  family member |  |
| Childcare | S17 Non-  Accommodation  / S17 Childcare | Under 2-year-olds: only if assessed as a need for child development or in absolute extreme circumstances. | Invoice paid via Purchase Order | Payment Requisition | Approval by Head of Service and if agreed this must be paid on time to avoid late payment charges.  Absolutely no cash payments. |
|  |  | Over 2-year-olds: 15 hours free through EEP. |  |  |  |
|  |  | 3-year-olds: 30 hours if earning over 16 hours per week. |  |  |  |
|  |  | Apply for Universal credit to get 85% of childcare costs (up to  £646 for one child,  £1,108 for two or more) if working. |  |  |  |
| After school / Holiday clubs |  | Only ever paid in exceptional circumstances or when a child has specific  assessed and identified needs. | Invoice paid via Purchase Order | Payment Requisition | Service Manager approval unless a continuing need, when Head of Service approval will be needed. |

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| Expenditure type | Expenditure category | Method of providing assistance | Preferred Method of Payment | Alternative  Method of Payment | Maximum amounts |
| Holiday |  | Assistance from charities. | Invoice paid via Purchase Order | Payment Requisition or P- Card |  |
| Support Temporary private care | Financial responsibility for the arrangement  lies with the child’s family, and at the very least, the parent should be expected to provide the person caring for the child with the child benefit received for that child. | Prepaid Card to family member |  | Agreed by Head of Service in line with delegated responsibility limits. |
| Specialist assessments | S17 Non-  Accommodation  / Professional | Specialist assessments are only ever to be commissioned when it is assessed as a need  and will inform intervention. | Invoice paid via Purchase Order | Payment Requisition | Agreed by Head of Service in line with delegated responsibility limits. |
| Interpreter / Translation | Sourced through existing Interpreter Contract. | Invoice paid via Purchase Order | Payment Requisition | Team Manager approval. |
| Commission reports /  assessments | As specialist assessments | Invoice paid via Purchase Order | Payment Requisition |  |

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| Expenditure type | Expenditure category | Method of providing assistance | Preferred Method of Payment | Alternative  Method of Payment | Maximum amounts |
| Furniture / | S17 | Community resources | Invoice paid via | Payment |  |
| bedding / safety | Accommodation | should be considered | Purchase Order | Requisition or P- |
| equipment | / Furnishings | including advice |  | Card |
|  |  | agencies and charities. |  |  |
|  |  | Enable families to |  |  |
|  |  | utilise family and |  |  |
|  |  | community resources. |  |  |
| Private | S17 | Deposit must be | Invoice paid via | Payment |  |
| accommodation | Accommodation | reclaimed when family | Purchase Order or | Requisition or |
| (e.g., Deposit / | / Housing Cost / | or young person leaves | Invoice Plan paid | Invoice Plan |
| First month | S17 Rent; Bond | the property. | direct to |  |
| rent) |  | (Accommodation Team) | landlord/agency |  |
| B and B |  | Payments are to be | Invoice paid via |  |  |
| accommodation |  | informed by | Purchase Order or |
|  |  | Accommodation Team | Invoice Plan direct |
|  |  | – Intentionally | to landlord |
|  |  | Homeless and NRPF |  |
|  |  | Families – payment only |  |
|  |  | to be made whilst |  |
|  |  | waiting for matter to be |  |
|  |  | resolved. |  |
| Rubbish | S17 | Families should be | Invoice paid via | Payment | £200.00 |
| removal / Skips | Accommodation | enabled to facilitate | Purchase Order | Requisition |  |
|  | / | any clean up required |  |  |  |
|  | Accommodation | using their own |  |  |  |
|  | Readiness | resource. In exceptional |  |  |  |
|  |  | circumstances, CSC may |  |  |  |

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| Expenditure type | Expenditure category | Method of providing assistance | Preferred Method of Payment | Alternative  Method of Payment | Maximum amounts |
|  |  | support with rubbish removal, this should only ever be on one occasion. If change is not sustained, this is to be used to evidence  further assessment. |  |  |  |

# Appendix 2 – Subjective coding/reporting of expenditure

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| Expenditure type | Expenditure category | GL code | GL code description | Proclass code (for purchase orders only) | Proclass description |
| Food | S17 Non- | 5210 | General Provisions |  |  |
| Gas and Electric | Accommodation / | 4100 / 4102 | Electricity / Gas |  |  |
| Provisions / Personal |
| Clothing | 5300 | Clothing & Laundry |  |  |
| Items |
| Toiletries |  | 5950 | Other Expenses |  |  |
| Nappies and Baby Milk |  | 5950 | Other Expenses |  |  |
| Official Documents |  | 5423 | Other Stationery |  |  |
| Equipment e.g. |  |  |  |  |  |
| washing |  | 5010 | Office Equipment | 161000 | Domestic Goods |
| machine |  |  |  |  |  |
| Direct Work |  | 7040 | Payments/Aid to Clients |  |  |
| Awaiting Benefits |  | 7040 | Payments / Aid to Clients |  |  |
| Denied Benefits |  | 7040 | Payments / Aid to Clients |  |  |
| To assessments  / appointments | S17 Non-Accommodation / | 4700 | Public Transport Fares |  |  |
| To School | 4700 | Public Transport Fares |  |  |

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| Maintain Contact | Contact / Travel Support  Families must be enabled to use their own resources such as family and friends. | 4700 | Public Transport Fares |  |  |
| Activities / support groups | 4700 | Public Transport Fares |  |  |
| Child care | S17 Non-Accommodation / S17 Childcare | 5511 | Recreation | 291400 | Arts & Leisure Services |
| After school / Holiday clubs | 5511 | Recreation | 291400 | Arts & Leisure Services |
| Holiday | 5511 | Recreation | 291400 | Arts & Leisure Services |
| Support Temporary  private care | 5511 | Recreation | 291400 | Arts & Leisure Services |
| Specialist assessments | S17 Non-Accommodation / Professional | 5600 | Professional Service | wsx900121 | Professional Services |
| Interpreter / Translation | 6431 | Translation Services | 261100 | Interpretation & Translation |
| Commission reports / assessments | 5600 | Professional Service | wsx900121 | Professional Services |
| Furniture / bedding / safety equipment | S17 Accommodation / Furnishings | 5000 | Furniture & Fittings | 211100 | Furniture & Soft Furnishings |
| Private accommodation  (e.g. Deposit / | S17 Accommodation / Housing Cost / S17  Rent; Bond | 6890 | Family/OLAC Accommodation | wsx900335 | Accommodation |

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| First month  rent) |  |  |  |  |  |
| B&B accommodation | 6891 | Family/OLAC B & B | wsx900334 | B & B |
| Rubbish removal / Skips | S17 Accommodation / Accommodation Readiness | 4210 | Cleaning Contracts | 131310 | Cleaning & Janitorial |