

Payments to Children and Young People

Policy and Guidance for Northumberland Adolescent Service

Revised December 2023

SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 provides financial arrangements for Looked After Children (LAC), eligible, relevant and former relevant young people and makes clear that the responsible authority will normally be the young person's primary source of income.

Access to Universal Credit is removed except for certain exceptions where 16- and 17-year-old care leavers can claim benefits. However, 16- and 17-year-old care leavers cannot claim benefit support for their rent. All such financial assistance will be provided by the team with case responsibility and will cover income maintenance, accommodation, housing costs, educational costs and other expenses such as travel and leisure.

Financial support goes beyond simply making payments, it is also about making sure young people have the financial knowledge and skills to be able to open a bank account, pay bills and financially plan for the long term.

Each young person will have a different set of needs and a different capacity to manage a budget. Some young people may have sources of income of their own, such as wages from employment.

This means that, in each case, the relevant worker will agree a financial support package with the young person and include this in their Pathway Plan.

Payments

All payments above income maintenance and housing costs for 16/17 year old's are discretionary and are not an entitlement. Items that are considered to be a priority for financial assistance include:

- Education materials / special
- Other educational costs
- Costs associated with special need (pregnancy or disability)
- Contact with family or other significant relationships

This list is not exhaustive and any other requests for financial support should be discussed with the team manager, or the senior manager and brought to the finance panel for agreement.

Wherever possible, social security benefits and relevant charitable grants should be obtained before requesting payments. When a young person reaches 18, they are expected to access social security benefits from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) if they are not able to support themselves fully through employment, an apprenticeship or a training placement.

Social workers are to assist care leavers to begin the process of claiming benefits 28 days before their 18 birthday. Should there be difficulties with this through the DWP then Welfare Rights Officers will support the Northumberland Adolescent Service (NAS) and the young person to progress the claim for benefits.

NAS will provide payments in certain circumstances; for example, through the setting up home allowance.

Young People living in a Children's Home will be covered by the procedures - 'Young People Looked after in Children's Homes' Young People living in a foster care placement will be covered by the procedures - 'Finance and Provision for Fostering Carers'.

Definitions

Eligible - An Eligible Young person is one who is aged 16 or 17, has been looked after by the local authority for a period of 13 weeks since the age of 14, and who remains looked after. The period of 13 weeks need not have been continuous and may be made up of a series of shorter periods during which the child was looked after.

It should be noted that the period of care must cross their 16th birthday. Planned periods of respite do not count towards eligibility. All young people at the age of 13 who are looked after should be supported to open a bank account. It is the Case Manager's (Social Worker) responsibility to ensure that all young people who remain looked after at the age of 15 receive a national insurance number.

It is the responsibility of the Case Manager to make the application for the national insurance number and ensure that this is recorded on ICS for future reference.

Relevant - A Relevant child is one who is aged 16 or 17, was previously an Eligible child but who is no longer looked after. Please note that young people on Care Orders remain Eligible until such time as they reach 18 or the Care Order is discharged.

For these young people please refer to the financial procedure for eligible young people or the procedures relating to foster care or residential care, whichever is appropriate.

Former Relevant - A Former Relevant young person is a young person who has reached 18, but not 25, and was eligible or relevant prior to becoming 18.

Young People Remanded into the Care of the Local Authority

Young people remanded into the care of the local authority are regarded as eligible, even if they are not given a custodial sentence, if the period of remand is for 13 weeks or more and crosses their 16th birthday.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers

Young people who are seeking asylum are covered by the terms of the Act if they were formerly looked after for the required period of 13 weeks.

Issues covered by this Procedure for Eligible Young People

This procedure only deals with financial support for eligible young people who have left care, i.e. not in foster care or residential care. For details of financial support for eligible young people who are still looked after refer to the foster care and residential guidelines.

SECTION 2 - FINANCE PANEL AND PAYMENTS

Authorisation of Payments.

A Finance Panel meets every week to assess and authorise payments to young people. Requests for finance are made by the Social Worker (SW) or Leaving Care Support Worker (LCSW) giving full details of the reasons for the request to include supporting documents and the amount, on a cash request form (CH5c).

Social workers must ensure the form is completed fully with as much information as possible to enable the panel to make a decision. Where necessary evidence should also be provided. For example, if setting up home allowance is being requested then evidence of the tenancy needs to be provided.

The Panel will make a decision on these requests and notify the social workers by email at the end of the panel meeting. Requests will be approved, deferred or declined. If a request is declined, the case can be discussed with the team manager. Deferred requests will be passed back to workers with the reason for deferral. Requests can be resubmitted to Panel for further consideration when workers have answered the question or supplied the information requested.

All decisions for recurring payment requests will be given a review date which will be a maximum of three months. Prior to the review date, admin will notify the worker to prompt them to make a new cash request for the payment to continue.

Even if there are no changes, a new payment request must be made to confirm this otherwise payment to the young person will cease once the review date has passed.

How Young People are Paid

Admin are responsible for making sure young people receive their payments if these are paid by BACs. In exceptional circumstances cash payments can be made. It is the responsibility of the social worker to obtain this from admin and sign that they have received the money.

For all cash payments the social worker must provide a receipt to admin within two weeks of receiving the cash payment. If cash payments have been given directly to the young person (this should only happen if the young person does not have a bank account and agreed by management) then the worker needs to provide a signed document from the young person to evidence they have received it.

Process

Admin will copy all completed approved Request for Finance Forms, forward the copy to the worker for information and the originals will be processed for BACs payments. The deferred or refused finance forms will be returned to the worker for cash requests, the worker will then approach the Finance Officer for the approved monies.

The payment in the form of a cash advance will be issued to the worker and they will be asked to sign a completed Cash Receipt form and the cash handbook detailing the date, the name of the young person the amount issued and who has collected the payment.

The Cash in hand book is then balanced according to the Corporate financial procedures and the Finance Officer's spreadsheet updated. As stated above receipts must be provided within two weeks of the worker receiving the cash.

The Finance officer will file their copies of the Finance Request form and Receipt of monies form. All Young People should have a bank account, however for those Young People without a bank account, alternative arrangements can be made for payments to be paid in cash from petty cash systems or in the form of a prepaid debit card in exceptional circumstances.

It is expected that all young people will be helped to access a bank account and cash payments are only a short-term measure until bank accounts are obtained. Cash payments are not intended to be used as a regular payment method.

IMPORTANT

It is the responsibility of the LCSW or SW to make sure that admin are aware of all payments that are no longer required. It is also the responsibility of the LCSW or SW that all receipts and unspent monies are returned to admin.

If receipts cannot be produced the LCSW or SW must sign a 'Loss of Receipts Form' which should be presented at the next panel. Admin will monitor receipts and will remind social workers that they need to be provided.

If a receipt has not been provided within one month of the request then the loss of receipts form will be completed by the worker and signed by manager at that time.

SECTION 3 - LIVING EXPENSES

Income Maintenance payments (regular weekly payments in line with benefits) are only made directly to the young person beyond the end of year 11 and they are in independent living.

For young people in these circumstances, Social workers need to seek welfare rights support with regards to applying for benefits as the young person could be eligible for benefits. Prior to this payment will be made under the foster care and residential care guidelines.

For those young people not eligible for benefits, the social worker needs to support the young person to commence a benefit claim 28 days before their 18th Birthday to ensure benefits are in place when they turn 18.

Eligible and Relevant Young People Living in the Community

This is a payment made by the team with case responsibility to "maintain a young person's income". The payments mirror the rate of Universal Credit paid by the DWP. The implementation of the payments is as described in the Young Person's Pathway Plan.

These payments are paid directly to the young person, normally through a bank account. Income maintenance is paid to cover the costs of living, i.e. food, clothing, toiletries, utility bills etc. Income maintenance can be "paid" in kind as well as cash, for example buying food or putting credit on a fuel card to replace cash.

For some young people who are still developing money management skills, income maintenance may need to be paid in smaller more frequent payments however this should only be seen as a short-term aid until the young person is able to better manage their income.

Benefit Claims for 16-17 year old's

Some young people aged 16 or 17 can make a claim to Universal Credit (UC) before they turn 18. This could include eligible or relevant young people who are:

- unable to work through sickness or disability; or

- lone parents; or couples who are looking after a child; or
- pregnancy - an eligible or relevant young person who is pregnant can claim UC only if they have a fit note from their GP (eg due to a pregnancy related illness)

Qualifying Young People under 18 can claim UC in addition to the grounds above, where they are:

- “without parental support” (ie estranged from their parents) and in education
- pregnant with less than 11 weeks before the week the baby is due
- providing care for a disabled person for 35hrs per week or more

Social workers should seek welfare rights advice and support for all young people living independently or in supported accommodation to check if they are eligible. If a claim to UC can be made, Income Maintenance payments will cease.

Even if a claim to UC is successful, a claim for Housing Costs element cannot be made to cover their rent costs and costs for accommodation will still need to be met by the council until the young person turns 18.

Income from other sources

All Income Maintenance payments (whether the young person is in Supported Accommodation or in Independent Living) are adjusted accordingly if the young person has income from any other source e.g. benefits, wages etc.

Adjustments will be made in line with the DWP benefit rules. The LCSW or SW will need to provide full information of a young person’s income in order that this can be done.

Former Relevant and Qualifying Children

Social Security Benefits are paid to people who are 18 years old and above who do not have any other source of income, for example, wages, or are on a low wage. Former relevant young people should access benefits from their 18th birthday if they are not receiving income from elsewhere.

When a young person reaches 18 they will no longer be able to access income maintenance to cover living expenses from NAS. Universal Credit is likely to be the main benefit that is claimed on turning 18, although other benefits may also be available depending on the circumstances of the young person.

Welfare Rights can give advice and information relating to all benefits - see Section 10 for more information on benefits available. Social workers should support young people to begin the claim for Universal Credit 28 days before their 18th Birthday so that the claim is in place when they turn 18 years.

Social workers will be sent an email from Welfare Rights before each looked after young person turns 18. Social Workers will need to respond to this email to advise how the young person will support themselves when they turn 18.

Universal Credit Universal Credit (UC) has replaced Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance, Employment Support Allowance, Housing Benefit and tax credits for all new claims to benefit. Some young people who had claimed these older benefits will remain on them until some change in their circumstances. Housing Benefit can still be claimed in certain exempt accommodation – such as independent supported accommodation.

UC is a benefit that can pay for living costs in or out of work, and has an element for children and rent (called Housing Costs). UC is “digital by default” and an online claim is made at www.gov.uk/applyuniversal-credit. When the claim starts there is a calendar month assessment period after which the amount of UC is calculated and paid 5 working days later.

This means the first UC payment will not be made until at least 5 weeks after the day the claim started. A Short-Term Benefit Advance (STBA) can be requested by a young person who has made a claim for Universal Credit and is waiting for a decision and first payment. This is a loan which will be recovered by deducting instalments from the first three UC payments. It is not recommended that the STBA is applied for by a young person claiming UC for the first time, as in effect the STBA is a loan.

Instead, if a young person makes a claim to UC in the week of their 18th birthday at the latest, the LCSW or SW can apply to the Finance Panel for continued living expenses to cover the period without any UC being paid. Proof of the claim (for example a screenshot of the completed application notification) must be attached to the CH5 request. See Section 10 for further details.

Council Tax Support and Council Tax Liability

Council Tax Support is a benefit that helps to pay for council tax liability for someone on no wage, or a low wage. At most it will cover 92% of liability meaning most people will still need to pay some council tax even if they are without a job.

Council Tax Support will need to be claimed alongside Universal Credit which does not cover council tax liability. Council tax liability can be reduced through various discounts or exemptions. For example, someone who is living alone can get a 25% reduction on their council tax liability.

Northumberland County Council, in common with most other councils, offer a Care Leaver Discount, which effectively means any care leaver has a 100% discount applied to their council tax liability from age 18 - 21. This came into effect from April 2018.

Social workers need to ensure that the council is aware of their care leavers so the discount is applied. The discount can be backdated to when the young person turned 18 in April 2018.

SECTION 4 - ACCOMMODATION COSTS

The accommodation costs of eligible and relevant young people will, in all circumstances, be met by the responsible Locality team.

Former relevant young people are responsible for their own accommodation costs. These costs will generally not be covered by NAS except in the limited circumstances given below.

If a young person is on a low income they will need to claim benefits and may be entitled to the housing element of Universal Credit, or in some limited circumstances Housing Benefit, to cover rent costs. Size criteria apply to anyone who claims either UC or HB to help with rent, whether this is in the private or social sector.

Help with rent in the private sector is limited by the Local Housing Allowance (which can differ between local authorities). Support for social sector rent can be limited by having a spare room. Social Workers should contact Welfare Rights for advice on what housing costs can be covered by UC/HB.

ELIGIBLE AND RELEVANT Young People Rent Costs

Where young people are in employment it is expected that a contribution from their income will be used towards their rent. The amount of this contribution can be calculated in line with the rules applied to calculating income for benefits.

Welfare rights can assist with the calculation, if LCSW or SW provides information about the young person's income and circumstances.

Supported Accommodation and Supported Lodgings

Where a young person is accommodated within Supported Lodgings or other Supported Accommodation provision via the Accommodation Service, the Accommodation Service budget will pay the rent element and support element for those young people who are eligible and relevant.

For young people who are classified as a Child in Need or a Former Relevant young person, there is an expectation that a claim for Universal Credit Housing Costs or Housing Benefit will be made. The Accommodation Service will continue to pay the support costs of the placement

The young person is expected to pay their service charge contribution directly to the accommodation provider. The service charge contribution will vary depending on the accommodation accessed.

For young people accessing a supported lodgings placement, there is an expectation that the young person will pay a weekly board element of £20 to their supported

lodgings provider (SLP) towards the cost of food, heating and lighting. All such details should be written into the Pathway Plan.

Young People who are in the Armed Forces Living Expenses

It is expected that wages will cover the living expenses of those young people in the armed forces.

Accommodation Costs Whilst in the Armed Forces

Accommodation costs will be the responsibility of the young person.

On Leave

If a young person is to return home during leave, for example to a previous Staying Put Provider, they will be responsible for their rent whilst they are in that accommodation.

Young People who were in Supported Lodgings Accommodation prior to joining the armed forces

It is recognised that young people who have been supported through their earlier life have increased life chances. It is therefore recognised that a young person who has joined the armed forces may wish to return home to a previous Staying Put Provider when he/she is on leave and for this to occur it is recognised that payment needs to continue in some form to Staying Put Provider in order to ensure continuity, stability and support for young people from their main carers during their time away and ensuring this accommodation is available for them during leave periods.

FORMER RELEVANT

Universal Credit for housing costs and Housing Benefit

Accommodation costs for former relevant young people may be met by Universal Credit, even if the young person is in work. In very limited circumstances, eg where the young person is in certain types of supported accommodation, Housing Benefit may be claimed instead.

Former relevant young people must make a claim for UC/HB where they are eligible. Unlike HB, UC housing costs are paid monthly in arrears as part of the UC award paid directly to the young person. The young person then needs to pay their rent to their landlord. It is possible for the young person to request that the housing costs element is paid directly to the landlord.

Local Housing Allowance (Private Sector Rents)

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is used to determine the rate of UC Housing Costs/HB paid to tenants living in private rented accommodation. The LHA rate is based on the size requirements of the family and the broad rental market area (BRMA) the property is in.

The LHA rates generally differ significantly between different local authorities/market areas. Care Leavers under the age of 25 should usually receive at least the 1 Bedroom rate of LHA, rather than the lower Shared Accommodation Rate.

UC Housing Costs/HB for private tenants is usually paid directly to the tenant unless they are treated as vulnerable (see below)

Spare Room Reduction (Social Sector Rents)

The LHA does not apply to those renting social housing. Instead UC Housing Costs/HB can be reduced if a young person has a “spare” bedroom according to their needs.

If a young person has a reduction in their housing costs due either the LHA or because of a spare room, they can apply to the council for a Discretionary Housing Payment, further advice can be sought from Welfare Rights.

Vulnerable Tenants

UC Housing Costs/HB may be paid directly to the landlord for vulnerable young people. Examples of vulnerability include:

- Learning Disability
- Medical condition that is likely to seriously impair their ability to manage on a day-to-day basis
- Is illiterate
- Unable to speak English
- Addiction to drugs, alcohol or gambling
- Severe debt problem
- Been declared bankrupt
- Unable to open a bank account
- Possibly will not use LHA to pay the rent
- Is in arrears with rent
- Is under 18

Letters of support from LCSW/SW as well as GP's, probation officers and landlords will be crucial in supporting vulnerable young people to have UC Housing Costs/HB paid directly to their landlord.

Please ensure that when a young person is moving into new accommodation that appropriate benefits have been applied for and actions taken. It may also be necessary for vulnerable young people who are in receipt of significant benefits and whom may be at increased risk of harm if they were to receive the full amount, to have a LA appointee.

If this is a concern, please discuss with your line manager for advice on how this can be put in place.

Rent in advance and Budgeting Advances

Budgeting Advances

Budgeting Advances are interest free loans, provided by the DWP, intended to help people with intermittent expenses which are difficult to budget for when living on Universal Credit.

For young people who satisfy the appropriate conditions, Budgeting Advances can be used for rent in advance and/or removal expenses to secure fresh accommodation. The advance will be deducted from UC to pay it back, however, when a young person moves property any bond that is repayable will be paid to them in a lump sum.

Budgeting Advances should not be applied for, for any care leaver under the age of 18 years. Financial support for these young people needs to be requested at the finance panel.

For post 18 care leavers other options need to be explored before a Budgeting Advance is applied for, to prevent the young person getting into debt. In exceptional circumstances emergency payment requests can be made to the finance panel for post 18 care leavers.

However, they may not be approved as the Local Authority has no commitment to provide financial support to care leavers over 18 who are not in Education.

Budgeting Loans

Budgeting Loans provide similar assistance to Budgeting Advances and are for young people on legacy benefits such as Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance or Job Seekers Allowance.

Seek advice from Welfare Rights for eligibility criteria.

Setting up Home Allowance

The Setting up Home Allowance (SUHA) is a payment that is used to enable a young person to move to an independent living situation and can only be accessed at this time. (See setting up home allowance guidance in the appendices).

This is when a young person secures the tenancy of a flat or house. The preferred option is for the accommodation to be provided by the Local Authority, a Housing Association or a Voluntary Sector Housing Scheme. In some circumstances it may also include a private rented tenancy. In these circumstances extra care is required to ensure furniture can easily be removed when the tenancy is terminated.

Wherever possible it needs to be acknowledged that when a young person reaches 18, they will need to apply for Universal Credit, or in limited circumstances, Housing Benefit to cover the rent of a property.

Therefore, the rent of properties that are found for 16- and 17-year Olds needs to as far as possible be at a realistic rate for the amount of benefit (UC or HB) that will be paid to a young person.

NAS will not cover any rent for 18 year olds except in very exceptional circumstances with the approval of the Senior Manager.

The SUHA should only be requested when it is considered appropriate for the young person to move to an independent form of accommodation. The accommodation should be in the name of the young person (the tenant) who is furnishing the property with their allowance.

A SUHA will not be paid where the young person is not named on the tenancy agreement. Guide prices are given for the items that can be purchased as part of the SUHA and a list of approved suppliers is provided.

All cash expenditure from the SUHA must be supervised. This is initially by the LCSW or SW from NAS. Other colleagues may be involved in the spending of the allowance, but accountability for receipts/ balancing/ supervision remains with the LCSW or SW.

All payments must be recorded in the young person's file. Any unspent monies must be paid back to NAS. Only items requested on the cash request form can be purchased. If further items are required a further cash request form MUST be submitted to the finance panel.

For any receipts or monies not returned a loss of monies/receipts form MUST be submitted to panel for approval.

When a young person moves into a tenancy, (their own tenancy) they are able to access their allowance. To ensure that it is the young person's tenancy, NAS (or team with case responsibility) must be provided with a copy of the tenancy agreement, which must bear the name of the young person. A copy of the tenancy agreement must also be provided to the finance panel as evidence of and for SUHA payment requests to be processed.

Setting up Home Allowance and Supported Accommodation

If, in the first instance, a young person moves into supported accommodation (i.e Places for People, YMCA or, supported lodgings) they can access up to £250 of their SUHA Allowance.

This allowance should be agreed only after an assessment of need has been made, and must be used for essential items only, which can be taken with them when they move into their own tenancy. A proof of licence agreement is required.

Setting up Home Allowance and Joint Tenancies

If a young person has a joint tenancy, then they can apply for up to 50% of their SUHA. Details of the items requested must be listed on the cash request form so that if the tenancy breaks down it is clear what has been purchased by the young person to take with them to any future tenancies.

Setting up Home Allowance and Private Tenancies

If the tenancy is a private let then the LCSW or SW must assess the need. The SUHA will be released to help furnish the accommodation; however, the allowance must be spent on items that the young person will be able to take with them when they move on. Items such as carpets should not be purchased for private lets.

Setting up Home Allowance and Young People in Full Time Employment

If a young person has been in full time employment for some time earning more than £20,000 per year, any wages they receive will be taken into account when deciding the amount of SUHA that will be awarded.

Where a young person has only recently started work or is earning less than £20,000 per year the SUHA will be paid in the normal way.

Exceptional Circumstances

In rare circumstances where a young person has suffered exceptional circumstances of material loss, or where a professional has used their SUHA in an inappropriate manner, then a further discretionary payment may be considered.

SECTION 5 - FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Introduction

Financial assistance for local further education and training courses can be paid to eligible, relevant and former relevant young people who are studying or training. This should be detailed as part of their Pathway Plan when a young person cannot claim benefits.

Further education includes access courses, A-Levels and below.

Assistance to such young people can be extensive and have a long-term impact on the budget. As such, staff should be mindful when requesting financial assistance that all other avenues of financial support have been exhausted, including referrals to relevant charities.

Living expenses for young people under 18 in education/training

Eligible and relevant young people in education/training may be entitled to claim Universal Credit in certain circumstances. This is where they are:

- unable to work through sickness and receive a disability benefit (DLA, or PIP); or
- a lone parent; or
- couples, both of whom are students who are looking after a child Qualifying

Young People/CIN under 18 can claim UC in addition to the grounds above, where they are:

- “without parental support” (ie estranged from their parents) and in education
- pregnant with less than 11 weeks before the week the baby is due

Where benefits cannot be claimed for a young person in full time education, who is in independent living, NAS will provide weekly income maintenance, equivalent to DWP benefits.

In addition to either benefits or income maintenance a young person will also be entitled to either a discretionary bursary paid by the education provider or education incentives paid by NAS. These payments are to support with costs such as education equipment, travel.

Young People in full time education aged 18, 19 and 20

Former Relevant young people who are in full time non-advanced education (i.e. studying for qualifications below the standard of a degree e.g Access courses and “A” levels and below) may be able to claim Universal Credit (or exceptionally one of the legacy benefits) until their 21st birthday.

Full time education is classed as more than 12hrs per week of study. Young people in this category need to show that they are without parental support or are unable to work and get DLA/PIP, or they are responsible for a child. Universal Credit Housing Costs will be paid in these circumstances.

Advice should be sought from Welfare Rights about claiming benefits.

Education Incentives

Incentive payments can be made to those young people who are engaged in an approved course of education. Eligibility for a bursary from the education provider must be checked prior to any request made for education incentives by NAS or the team with case responsibility.

In order to be paid incentives the LCSW or SW and the education provider must verify the course, and the LCSW or SW must verify a young person’s attendance on a weekly basis. This duration will coincide with cash request review dates at panel. No incentives will be paid if attendance is not verified.

Incentives will not be paid in any vacation periods. This is in order to make this incentive equivalent to those young people receiving a bursary.

This education incentive is dependent on the needs of the individual but will not exceed £30.00 per week for those young people on a full-time course. (A full-time course, for the purposes of this procedure, is a course which is over 24 hours). This payment is dependent on the young person's attendance on the course.

The young person's income will also be taken into account when a decision is made with regards to any education incentive payments. SW's and LCSW's are to explore with education establishments if the young person can access a bursary before applying for education incentive payments.

Additional Costs and Allowances available - Discretionary payments based on young person's income

Travel Costs for Education/Training

The costs of travel are included in education incentives paid by NAS or the bursary and it is expected that part of this incentive be used for travel costs. Young people not in receipt of a bursary or education incentive payment can be provided financial assistance for transport costs to their education establishment dependent on the young person's income. A request needs to be made to the finance panel with evidence of the income.

Books/Equipment/Essential Clothing

A standard amount of £50 is paid towards the cost of stationery. This is intended to cover the costs of the basic stationery items. For any other items that are needed, for example specific books and specialist clothing or equipment, individual requests will need to be made to the finance panel with full details and costings for all items.

When requesting the above the LCSW or SW should be satisfied that the young person will attend the course and the equipment purchased is of a suitable type (check with course tutor where necessary). The spending must be supervised.

Childcare

Young people who are caring for their children may be helped with childcare costs for the duration of their course. The LCSW or SW should access Sure Start and the College for help with childcare costs.

SECTION 6 - YOUNG PEOPLE STUDYING FOR A DEGREE/FOUNDATION DEGREE

Higher Education

Where a young person wishes to apply to university and make a UCAS application, the service will support with the costs of UCAS application fees in line with the costs listed

by UCAS. This can be in the form of a single or multiple application. The cost for a multiple application is currently £27.50:

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/filling-your-ucas-undergraduate-application>

NAS will provide financial support to a young person studying for a degree at university/foundation degree. It is expected that course details are provided to NAS at the onset of the course and arrangements around financial support are discussed prior to applying to university to outline what support may be available and recorded appropriately within the finance section of the young person's pathway plan

NAS will only fund 1 degree course. Where a young person has completed one degree and chooses to complete another standard degree course, NAS will not provide financial support for the 2nd degree course

Note - Access courses are considered equivalent to A-level standard - see Section 5 above.

To access ongoing financial support the young person must confirm continued attendance with their worker from NAS on a monthly basis and engage with regular support visits (at least 3 monthly but may be monthly depending on the needs of the young person). All payments will be regularly reviewed at the finance panel and evidence of attendance will be requested by panel at these review periods throughout the young person's higher education.

Should we fail to obtain the relevant evidence of attendance, weekly income maintenance payments may cease until such time as confirmation is received that the young person is regularly attending lectures and seminars.

For young people whose attendance falls below 70%, further discussions will need to take place between the young person and their worker to discuss reasons for the drop in attendance and relevant support should be put in place to help the young person increase their attendance at university.

Open University Degrees

Young people who are seeking to complete a degree via the open university will not be entitled to financial support from NAS other than to claim their higher education bursary. As open university degrees are not full time course, young people may be able to claim universal credit for their daily living costs as well as their housing costs.

As a service we encourage young people to apply for a standard university course a preferred option

Degree Apprenticeships

It should be noted that where a young person is undertaking a degree apprenticeship, no financial support will be available from NAS, as degree apprenticeships are classified as employment and the young person will be in receipt of an apprenticeship wage.

The only exception to this would be when a young person is in receipt of income less than their peers who are supported by NAS to attend university full time. In such cases financial support/top ups will be offered to equal the amount of financial support offered to other young people supported by NAS to complete an undergraduate degree.

Social Security Benefits

Generally young people are not eligible to claim benefits when they attend university full time unless they are lone parents or disabled students. If a LCSW or SW has a young person who wishes to attend university who is a lone parent or a disabled student, they must seek advice from Welfare Rights Helpline as they may be entitled to benefits.

Higher Education Bursary

Following the introduction of The Children Act 1989 (Higher Education Bursary) (England) Regulation's care leavers who attend higher education courses (foundation degrees, HND's and degrees) are entitled to receive a £2000 bursary from NAS. The bursary is to cover the full duration of the degree course but is only payable where the course is of a duration of 2 years or more

Please note, that further bursary payments will not be made for those young people, who go on to further study a Master's Degree at university.

This can be paid in instalments throughout the duration of the course; however the final instalment must be made at beginning of the final year.

The LCSW must discuss with the young person how the arrangements for the bursary payment will be made and record this in their pathway plan. The preferred option for payment of the bursary is that it be made in staged payments over the duration of the course of study.

Tuition Fees

Higher Education Institutes can charge tuition fees up to £9,250 per year. A tuition fee loan is available to pay these tuition fees. NAS will not assist with tuition fees.

Maintenance Loans

A maintenance loan will also be available to help with living and study costs. This will be repayable when students leave university and are earning over the specified amount at the time the loan was taken out.

A young person will be able to take out a Maintenance loan if they wish, however, NAS will not repay any loans that the student has incurred.

University Bursaries

There may be bursaries available through the educational institution attended and these should be applied for.

Accommodation Costs

Accommodation costs can be paid to young people attending university. Accommodation costs are for rent only. If a young person is in accommodation (e.g. halls of residence) where food and other costs such as utility bills are included in the total cost; amendments will be made to the weekly maintenance allowance to reflect this.

These payments will be regularly reviewed at panel and are subject to:

- Means testing in line with universal credit – if a young person is in receipt of a working wage whilst at university (working in excess of 12hrs per week) , the amount of rent paid may be reduced depending on the earnings of the young person and will need to be discussed at finance panel.
- The young person providing their LCSW with confirmation of their attendance at university lectures and seminars from their course tutor or leader

Where additional costs are included in the rent (i.e. heating, electric, Wi-Fi etc) and the accommodation provider is unable to provide a breakdown of these costs, a deduction of £20 per week will be made from the young person's weekly allowance.

In order to ensure that young people are clear about their entitlements prior to attending university, this should be discussed with the young person and reflected in their pathway plan.

Living Expenses

Living expenses are paid in addition to the bursary and accommodation costs. These living expenses are paid weekly in line with universal credit payments as set by central government, whilst the young person is in higher education. These payments will be regularly reviewed at panel and are subject to:

- Means testing in line with universal credit – if a young person is in receipt of a working wage whilst at university, the amount of weekly living allowance may be reduced depending on the earnings of the young person and will need to be discussed at finance panel.
- The young person providing their LCSW with confirmation of their attendance at university lectures and seminars from their course tutor or leader

Educational Expenses

In addition to living expenses and/or accommodation costs the following are also payable to all young people at university:

- 3 return journeys' home for the Easter, Summer and Christmas vacation periods (if applicable).
- The costs of graduation - to cover the costs of hiring gown, photographs etc

Discretionary Payments

All requests for other payments specific to individuals at university must be made to the Finance Panel. All requests will be decided on an individual basis. These discretionary payments will include travel and associated costs (for example, work placements) in relation to the course of study.

The LCSW or SW should support young people in accessing charitable funds for costs associated with education, for example, laptops.

Part Time Work

A student in Higher Education is not penalised if they secure a part time job whilst at University, as this could be considered to be a “normal” part of the University experience. This should be encouraged by the LCSW/SW. The LCSW or SW should check however that the hours worked do not impact negatively on the student’s learning. As a service we do not expect a young person to be working full time and where this is the case, it is unlikely that NAS would be able to offer financial support to a young person

For those young people who are working above part time hours or who may be earning, a significant amount of money (in excess of £20,000 combined in terms of earnings and supplementary finance from NAS), it may be necessary to complete a financial means test in line with universal credit arrangements to determine if it would be appropriate to reduce the amount of weekly living allowance and accommodation payments a young person receives.

Supported Lodgings Accommodation

Where a young person is returning to their Supported Lodgings Providers/ Staying Put carers for leave/vacations the provider will be paid the full fee during those periods. The young person will be liable for their own rent and board.

Masters Degrees

Tuition Fees

NAS do not fund master degrees.

Rent

Full rent will be paid for accommodation costs for the duration of the Master's degree including holiday periods for those under 25; subject to the same financial checks that

are applied to young people completing a standard degree. Where a young person is in receipt of earnings or income from another source, this will need to be taken into account when determining what financial support NAS will be able to provide.

Living Expenses

Living expenses will also be paid at the rate of universal credit, but this will be in term time only and will be subject to the same financial checks that are applied to young people completing a standard degree. Where a young person is in receipt of earnings or income from another source, this will need to be taken into account when determining what financial support NAS will be able to provide

It is expected that a young person would access employment or a student loan to cover living expenses during holiday periods.

Responsibilities of NAS

The financial implications of financially maintaining young people at university are great and require close monitoring by the responsible worker. The Team Manager should monitor the financial situation of higher education students.

A financial commitment to support a student at University would be for the period of the course and could exceed the age of 21. All this detail should be agreed and detailed in a Pathway Plan following discussions with the relevant team manager.

Charitable Grants for Care Leavers at University

The Rees Foundation currently offer charitable grants for care leavers at university, further information can be found at the Rees Foundation on the link below:

<https://www.reesfoundation.org/financial-assistance.html>

SECTION 7 - EMPLOYMENT

Financial assistance to eligible and relevant young people in work or undertaking an apprenticeship.

Young people who are in employment could be entitled to benefits and, in some circumstances, may still qualify for financial assistance from NAS. Advice regarding benefits should be sought from welfare rights before requesting financial support from the finance panel.

If the young person earns less than £98 per week, they may also be eligible for additional payments, i.e., travel expenses to support a young person in employment.

Individual requests need to be made to the finance panel with evidence of income and employment for a decision to be made for additional payments and expenditure list.

Financial assistance may be for a limited duration to help a young person into work or for a longer period but will always be subject to a minimum of 3 monthly reviews.

Financial Assistance to Former Relevant Young People in Work

Former relevant young people who are in employment may still qualify for financial assistance if they receive low income, this will be in the form of top up income from Universal Credit.

In exceptional circumstances a former relevant young person may be eligible for additional payments, i.e., travel expenses and/or lunch allowance. Full details with the reasons for this request must be presented to the finance panel. Requests should be accompanied by income and expenditure list with an identified amount required.

Any financial assistance considered for a young person in work must have the approval of the Finance Panel. Financial assistance may be for a limited duration to help a young person into work or for a longer period but will always be subject to a minimum of 3 monthly reviews.

SECTION 8 - MISCELLANEOUS PAYMENTS

Support to Parents re Travel Costs for Family Time

The service will consider requests from parents on a cases-by-case basis for support with travel costs associated with attending family time with their children. This may be in the form of public transport costs or mileage costs. Where mileage costs are requested, this will be limited to 15p per mile for any journeys undertaken.

Travel Costs

Travel costs can be requested, in exceptional circumstances, the payment should be, where possible in the form of a travel/bus pass. The LCSW or SW should have checked the details of the request before referring to the finance panel.

Clothing Payments

Relevant / Former relevant young people

Clothing payments are only paid when a needs assessment has been undertaken and it is deemed that the young person is in great need. In exceptional circumstances, where a young person has lost their clothing by fire or theft, requires clothing for a job interview or as a result of pregnancy, NAS may approve a one-off payment of up to £100 in any financial year.

Consideration of such a request would need care, as precedents could be set. Replacements for items of clothing removed by the police will not be agreed from the NAS budget.

Generally young people are expected to clothe themselves from their income maintenance or benefit payments.

Eligible Young people

For details of financial support for eligible young people who are still looked after, please refer to the foster care and residential guidelines. NOTE: All spending for any clothing will be on a supervised basis.

Birthdays and Christmas

Birthday and Christmas gifts will be provided to all relevant and former relevant young people including food up to a value of £25 for birthdays and young people can also choose to receive a gift at an increased value of £50 for either their 18th or 21st Birthday.

All birthday requests must be made to the finance panel and receipts provided. Christmas gift hampers will be provided to all relevant and former relevant young people.

Looked after young people will receive the appropriate amount relating to those in Children's Homes and Foster Placements, as outlined in the procedures below:

Young People living in Children's Home setting will be covered by procedure 'Young People Looked after in Children's Homes', which is held in Children's Handbook for each residential home.

Young People living in a foster care placement will be covered by procedure 'Finance and Provision for Fostering Carers'.

Cash will no longer be given to young people on these occasions. It is at the discretion of the LCSW or SW as to what this money should be spent on for Birthday gifts. However, the young person should be asked what they would like as a gift to the approved value.

Health care costs

A Relevant child can be exempt from paying some health care costs (not eye tests or help with glasses or contact lenses) - 16 and 17 year olds who have just left care can request an HC1(SC) form by telephone to the NHS enquiry line on 0300 330 1343. Some other groups of people may also be exempt or may receive some help towards health care costs - contact welfare rights for advice.

If no other assistance is available, requests for help with health costs can be made to the finance panel, however agreement must be sought prior to purchase, as

reimbursement will not automatically be made for items that have already been purchased.

Debts/Fines

NAS will not give financial assistance towards debts or fines incurred by young people apart from in very exceptional circumstances. Loans NAS, as it is funded by the public purse, is not in a position to be able to loan money to young people.

Identification Documents – Passports/Driving Licences and Birth Certificates

The service will support young people who are eligible, relevant and former relevant to access appropriate Identification documents. However, we will normally only fund one set of documents. If a young person loses any of their ID, it is not guaranteed that the service will replace these documents and any requests for additional documents will be considered on a case-by-case basis by finance panel.

Driving Lessons

The service will support young people with the cost of up to 10 driving lessons, a practical and theory test fee where the service feels that this is appropriate and in line with a young person's pathway plan.

We will not be in a position to fund multiple test fees where a young person has failed either their practical or theory test.

Any further lessons will need to be by the young person from their own finances. All financial requests for driving lessons will need to be applied for via finance panel.

Where a young person decides that they wish to learn to ride a motorcycle or moped, the service will support with the equivalent number of lessons and test fees as those young people learning to drive; subject to approval at finance panel.

As with driving test fees, the service will not be able to fund multiple test fees where a young person has failed their practical or theory tests.

It should be noted that the service will only support with applications for either driving lessons or Motorcycle lessons, we are not in a position to fund both options for a young person

Driving Lessons Grant for Young People In Receipt of Personal Independence Payments (PiP) from the Department of Works and Pensions

If a young person is in receipt of enhanced rate mobility component of PIP and gets Universal Credit they can apply for a grant from the Motability Scheme for driving lessons.

Where this applies the allocated worker for the young person, will need to support the young person to apply for a form by contacting the scheme on 0800 500 3186 and supporting them to make an application. The finance panel will only consider driving lesson costs when an application has been made and declined by the Motability Scheme

SECTION 9 - EMERGENCY PAYMENTS

Emergency payments are usually payments made to alleviate a particular crisis where a young person has no other access to finance. Such payments should only be made after careful consideration of the circumstances.

Typically, some of the most vulnerable young people will be those in most need of emergency payments. Any assistance given by NAS will be made in vouchers, food parcel, travel pass etc. Emergency payments can be made as stated above for any young person / family involved with NAS but must have management agreement and agreed by panel.

Young People who can claim Benefits

NETS - Northumberland Emergency and Transition Support

This is Northumberland County Council's local welfare provision. Further information is available at: <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Housing/Local-Welfare-Provision-NETS.aspx>

There are two elements:

- Emergency support: typically to provide support with utility top ups, emergency food provision, baby consumables, clothing and travel
- Transition support: typically awarded to people who either have dependent children normally living with them or are individuals/families who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, or have a substance misuse problem that they are receiving treatment or physical, sensory or mental health conditions.

NETS awards are discretionary and are dependent on meeting specific criteria. A transition award will not be made if eligible for a DWP Budgeting Advance.

Young People who cannot claim benefits

For young people who are not eligible to claim benefits (checks may need to be made by LCSW or SW with Welfare Rights to check for eligibility), a request for an emergency

payment must be made to a manager who must sign the cash request before payment can be made.

A reasonable suggestion is that a young person is given up to a maximum of £20 until they are due their next income maintenance payment. Any assistance given by NAS will be made in vouchers, food parcel, travel pass etc. The preferred option is that food parcels/food vouchers/fuel tokens should always be given as an alternative to cash where possible.

It is important to remember that in circumstances where the emergency payment is for gas or electricity the spending **MUST** be supervised. It is generally unacceptable to approve more than 2 emergency payments in any 6-month period.

However, such guidance should not be used as an acceptable course of action for a young person, nor should it be viewed as definitive if the young person is considered to be at extreme risk despite having received previous payments.

It should be noted that no young person is **ENTITLED** to 2 payments in a 6 month period as with all financial support the allowances are discretionary and based on an assessment of need. However, continued access to emergency payments may indicate that some work needs to be done with the LCSW or SW around budgeting skills.

SECTION 10 - SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

Welfare Rights

The Welfare Rights team can provide advice regarding any relevant claims for benefits. The following are events that need to be communicated to the Welfare Rights team in order that advice and information can be given and any relevant claims for benefit made. This following list is not exclusive:

- 16th birthday approaching - need to know approx 1 month before
- 18th birthday approaching - need to know approx 1 month before
- 21st birthday approaching - need to know approx 1 month before
- approaching the end of an educational course - need to know approx 1 month before

Any changes in circumstances

This includes the following but is not an exhaustive list:

- Pregnancy and due date
- Moving House, including to supported lodgings accommodation
- Incapacity or disability including physical/learning disability and/or mental health issues
- Admittance to hospital

- Admittance to YOI
- Stopping or starting work/education/training course
- Living at home with parents/relatives
- Is in one of the categories below as a 16/17-year-old who can claim income support

Universal Credit

Universal Credit is the means-tested benefit that can be claimed by young people on turning 18. It is paid to young people in work, out of work, with rent to pay, and who have children or are unable to work due to illness or disability.

UC replaced the older “legacy” benefits such as Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance, Job Seekers Allowance, Housing Benefit and tax credits. Some young people may still be in receipt of these older benefits, until their circumstances change.

Unlike legacy benefits, UC is paid as a single calendar monthly payment which includes the support to pay rent directly to the young person. Young people in this situation may need support from their SW or LCSW to manage their money to ensure rent and bills are paid. SW and LCSW are advised to seek advice from Welfare Rights for any issue with claiming UC.

Some young people aged 16 or 17 can make a claim to Universal Credit (UC) before they turn 18. This could include eligible or relevant young people who are:

unable to work through sickness or disability; or

- lone parents; or couples who are looking after a child; or
- pregnancy - an eligible or relevant young person who is pregnant can claim UC only if they have a fit note from their GP (eg due to a pregnancy related illness)

Qualifying Young People under 18 can claim UC in addition to the grounds above, where they are:

- “without parental support” (ie estranged from their parents) and in education
- pregnant with less than 11 weeks before the week the baby is due
- providing care for a disabled person for 35hrs per week or more

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

ESA is a legacy benefit that some young people who are unable to work through illness/disability may still have entitlement to. It is being replaced by Universal Credit.

Income Support

IS is a legacy benefit that some young people who are in education and estranged from their family may still have entitlement to. IS was paid to. It is being replaced by Universal Credit.

Job Seekers Allowance (JSA)

JSA is a legacy benefit that some young people who are unemployed and looking for work may have been entitled to. There are no new claims for income based JSA for young people as it is being replaced by Universal Credit.

Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

DLA is the disability benefit for young people under the age of 16. It is paid if the claimant has care or mobility needs arising from their illness or disabilities. It can be paid even if the young person is in hospital.

When someone on DLA is approaching their 16th birthday the DWP will inform them that their DLA will be ending, and they will be invited to claim Personal Independence Payment (PIP) instead (see below). If they do not claim PIP when they turn 16 their DLA will stop.

Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

PIP may be claimed for the first time from the age of 16. It is a benefit paid to people who are limited by their illness or disability in being able to look after themselves or if they have limited mobility.

PIP can be claimed regardless of a young person's care leaver status. Some young people turning 16 may already be in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (see above). Once they are informed by the DWP that their DLA will end they need to claim PIP within 4 weeks, or their DLA will stop.

Seek advice from welfare rights if you are not familiar with PIP or DLA. It is important that LCSW or SW seeks advice from welfare rights about anyone on their caseloads who may be entitled to DLA/PIP.

SECTION 11 - YOUNG PEOPLE IN PRISON

Whilst Serving a Sentence Young people in prison/young offenders institutes serving custodial sentences are not deemed to be living independently and therefore do not qualify for income maintenance.

Young people in prison receive wages whilst working or studying during their sentence. They are expected to use this money to enable them to buy toiletries, phone cards etc For those Eligible young people who do not receive any financial incentives whilst in the YOI, a weekly payment of £10 can be made.

On release

When young people are released from prison they are assessed as to whether they need any clothing by the Prison Service. If it is deemed that they need clothes, a clothing grant may be provided by the prison service.

Finances may be available from NAS (or team with case responsibility) on release. All applications need to be made to the Finance Panel who will assess each case individually. In the 28 days before leaving prison, a young person may begin their UC claim, where applicable.

Setting Up Home Allowances on Release

A young person released from custody may need to make an application to access their SUHA to purchase items for their new accommodation. Normal financial procedures apply as to amounts and purpose of any allowance payable.

SECTION 12 - YOUNG PEOPLE WHO RETURN HOME

Young People who are Looked after Under S20 Children's Act 1989 Young people who were looked after under s.20 and are placed with a parent, or someone who has parental responsibility for them, for a period of 6 months or more, will not be eligible for financial support from NAS after this time.

Until the young person has been at home for 6 months or more then they remain eligible for services but as a relevant young person. If a young person returns home for a period of two consecutive nights, a claim for Child Benefit can be made. This is regardless of the young person's LAC status.

The family may then be able to claim other benefits, such as Universal Credit, or additions to Child Tax Credit if already received. After 6 months, a young person is no longer under the remit of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the local authority no longer has financial responsibility for them.

Before discharging the young person, the social worker needs to obtain financial details about the family so that a full benefit check can be completed, and advice sought from the Welfare Rights team.

Young People at Home on Care Orders

If a young person is on a Care Order and living at home, they remain an Eligible Young Person under the Act. If they are on a Care Order, they will remain Eligible until the Care Order is discharged, either by the court or by the young person reaching age 18.

In some circumstances it is possible for the family to claim child benefit for the young person, even under a Care Order. Advice should be sought from Welfare Rights if a young person returns home for 2 or more days per week.

Young People at Home and Benefits

If a young person is living at home, the person with parental responsibility is expected to claim child benefit and Universal Credit (or additions to tax credits and housing benefit if already in payment) if the child can be included as a dependent.

In some circumstances, the young person may be able to claim Universal Credit in their own right but this would mean the person with parental responsibility would not be able to include the young person on their own benefit claim.

Depending on the family circumstances it may not always be the best option for the young person to make a claim so please seek advice from welfare rights to discuss a "better off" calculation.

Payments to Parents

Payments may only be made to the parent in exceptional circumstances. All benefits must be accessed as indicated above. Additional payments by NAS will only be in exceptional circumstances and only for up to the first 6 months at home with the agreement of the Team Manager or Specialist Services Manager.

Payments to Young People

Young people must always access the benefits system initially either for benefits paid to themselves or via a parent. If claims are not made on time, a young person may not be eligible for benefits. It is important that welfare rights are contacted when a young person moves home so that claims for benefits can be made on time.

If a young person is accommodated under s20 their accommodation status will end if they return home. If a young person is subject of a Care Order (section 31 Children Act) and they return home for at least two consecutive nights, then the parents will be encouraged to claim Child Benefit.

Payments to the young person will only be considered if there is no entitlement to claim benefits and will usually only be for a period of six months. These payments may continue longer than 6 months, depending on circumstances and only if there is no eligibility to benefits.

It should be noted that where young people have previously resided in supported accommodation and have been in receipt of income maintenance payments from NAS, this payment will not continue when the young person returns home; as there is an expectation that the parent is encouraged to make a claim for child benefit and any other benefits they may be entitled to.

The social worker for the young person will need to liaise with welfare rights to ensure that a benefit check is completed to ensure the parent is accessing all appropriate benefits.

Where a parent is not agreeable to this, they should be signposted to the Citizens Advice Bureau to seek their own advice. In exceptional cases, it may be agreed by the

Team Manager for Specialist Services Manager for interim payments to be made; but this will be subject to an assessment of financial needs and following advice from welfare rights.

SECTION 13 - YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE HOSPITAL INPATIENTS or in Care Homes

As the young person is not living independently they will not receive income maintenance. Hospital stays may also affect benefit entitlement and this change in circumstances must be reported immediately to DWP and the local authority housing benefit/council tax support team.

DLA/PIP payments can continue to be paid to young people who are in hospital while they are under 18 but the fact they are in hospital must be reported to the DWP

Care Homes – DLA/PIP can continue to be paid to young people in care homes. Daily living elements of these benefits stop after 28 days in a care home, but the mobility components

continue to be paid. Reporting that a young person is in a care home, or has left a care home, must be done timeously.

SECTION 14 - FINANCIAL RELATED DOCUMENTS

A number of documents have been produced (please see appendices attached) which give the main details of finances available to young people as outlined in this procedure. Please note that these checklists are intended to be used in conjunction with this procedure and not instead of the procedure.

APPENDICES RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Care Leavers Benefits Claims - Appendix 1
- Evidence for a Benefit Claim - Appendix 2
- Setting Up Home Allowance and Items threshold List - Appendix 3
- Checklist for 17 & 18 year olds in Further Education Training - Appendix 4
- Checklist for Young People at University - Appendix 5
- Checklist for Young People Miscellaneous Payments - Appendix 6
- Financial Request Form (Ch5) - Appendix 7
- Effects on Benefits for looked after Children - Appendix 8

Appendix 1

Care Leavers Universal Credit Claim Steps

To provide a streamlined clerical claim process for this vulnerable group to ensure that UC is in payment by the time local authority support ends on their 18th Birthday.

Step 1

4 weeks prior to care leavers birthday SW will be notified by Welfare Rights Officer to commence claims for UC if this is how the young person will be supporting themselves post-18.

Step 2

From 4 weeks prior to the care leavers 18th birthday, the young person can make an advanced claim to Universal Credit and may need social worker support to do this.

Step 3

Social Worker to ensure the young person has a National Insurance number, acceptable identification and current bank or post office account.

Step 4

The Social Worker is to contact the Single Point of Contact (SPOC) at the appropriate Job Centre Plus office to arrange for support with benefit claims and appointment to be booked as necessary. Note - the law allows an advanced claim to Universal Credit for Care Leavers before their 18th birthday.

In practice the DWP are refusing to allow these claims. If a social worker experiences the DWP refusing to allow an advanced claim to UC, they should seek advice from Welfare Rights.

Step 5

Social Worker to ensure the online claim is fully completed and screenshot taken to evidence claim has been made. Screenshot required so evidence can be provided to panel should any financial requests be made due to delays in benefit payments which would cause the YP to experience hardship.

Step 6

Any problems with payments to be discussed with Welfare Rights Officer and DWP Single Point Of Access (SPOC)

Step 7

JCP Care Leaver Single Point of Contact (SPOC) details

The following table contains the SPOC contact details for the Job Centres in Northumberland:

Area	Contact	Contact Details
Alnwick SPOC	Alison Hayes	01665 626212 alison.hayes1@dwp.gov.uk
	Deputy Graeme Brewis	01665 626210 graeme.brewis@dwp.gov.uk

Ashington SPOC	Jackie Hawkins Deputy Karen Slowther	01670 395242 jackie.hawkins@dwp.gov.uk 01670 395265 karen.slowther@dwp.gov.uk
Bedlington SPOC	Tracey Grossett Deputy Geri Jameson	01670 395409 tracey.grossett1@dwp.gov.uk 01670 395412 geraldine.jameson@dwp.gov.uk
Berwick SPOC	Elaine Blair Deputy Shona Forster	01289 356042 elaine.blair2@dwp.gov.uk 01289 356045 shona.forster@dwp.gov.uk
Blyth SPOC	Deputy Carol Blake	01670 395014 carol.blake@dwp.gov.uk
Cramlington SPOC	Susan Rainey Deputy Heather Farrier	01670 395133 susan.rainey@dwp.gov.uk 01670 395124 heather.farrier@dwp.gov.uk
SPOC Hexham	Angela Murgatroyd Deputies Sue Cunningham Margaret Craigie	01434 610787 angela.murgatroyd@dwp.gov.uk 01434 610794 sue.cunningham@dwp.gov.uk 01434 610798 margaret.craigie@dwp.gov.uk
SPOC Morpeth	Katherine Patrick Deputy Jane Donald	01670 395319 katherine.patrick@dwp.gov.uk SP01670 395320 jane.donald@dwp.gov.uk
SPOC Gateshead	Dian Goodall Blaydon -Suzanne Paisley	0191 4514230 dian.goodall@dwp.gov.uk 0191 4516905 suzanne.paisley@dwp.gov.uk
SPOC Newcastle	Karina Karzane Newcastle East - Lynne Williamson Lyndsey Harrison Newcastle West - Jennifer Jamieson	0191 215 2105 karina.karzane1@dwp.gov.uk Lynne 0191 220 4604 lynne.s.williamson@dwp.gov.uk 0191 220 4605 Lyndsey.harrison@dwp.gov.uk 0191 220 4542 Jennifer.jamieson@dwp.gov.uk

North Tyneside SPOC	Killingworth - Sharon Mcsherry	0191 220 8009 sharon.mcsherry@dwp.gov.uk
	Janet Skelton	0191 220 8019 janet.skelton@dwp.gov.uk
	North Shields - Michelle Burt	0191 64444011 michelle.burt@dwp.gov.uk
	Debs Miller	0191 2205462
	Wallsend - Dave Blythe	01912208735
	Louise Giacobazzi 01912208763	01912208763 louise.giacobazzi@dwp.gov.uk
South Tyneside SPOC	Lead Carol Hailes	Carol.hailes@dwp.gov.uk 0191 4513067
	Jarrow JobCente - Linda Stewart	Linda.stewart1@dwp.gov.uk 0191 4513022
	Timothy Wilson	Timothy.wilson@dwp.gov.uk 0191 4513024
	Faye Thompson	Faye.thompson@dwp.gsi.gov.uk 0191 4513081
	South Shields Job Centre -Susan McNally Diane Richardson	Susan.mcnally@dwp.gov.uk 0191 4514417 Diane.richardson@dwp.gov.uk 0191 4514324
	Washington SPOC	Janice Caulfield Sandra McShane

Appendix 2

Evidence for a Benefit Claim

Proof of Identity x 2:

- Current Passport
- Birth/Marriage Certificate

- Divorce/Annulment/Separation Papers
- Full or Provisional Driving License
- Benefit Award Letter●Payslip (recent)
- Bank Statement (recent)●Utility Bill (in the last 3 months)
- Medical CardProof of National Insurance Number
- National Insurance Card
- Wage Slip
- Benefit Letter
- HMRC letter confirming NI number

Proof of Residency (only for private/council tenancy)

- 2 x Utility Bills (must be recent):
- Tenancy Agreement where about to take up tenancy

Proof of Income

- Benefit / any other income (most recent)
- 2 months / 5 weekly payslips (must be most recent and consecutive)

Proof of Capital for ALL accounts held:

- Last 2 complete bank statements

Proof of any other income:

- Child Benefit / Tax Credits
- Disability Living Allowance
- All other incomeProof of rental liability
- Tenancy agreement
- Rent book (up to date)If anyone else lives with you they may be classed as a non-dependent and proof of their income will also be needed.

All this information must be provided within 28 days of making your claim. If it is not received the claim will be closed down and not processed.

Appendix 3

SETTING UP HOME ALLOWANCE

Standard List	Amount
Essential Items	£3,000

Restrictions on Setting up Home Allowance

Receiving Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit	Apply for NETs award in first instance.
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Joint tenancy Private rented accommodation and Supported Lodgings accommodation	Can access 50% of allowance Monies for carpets not paid Up to £250
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Thresholds - Setting up Home Allowance

Applications should be made to Northumberland Communities Together and the Greggs Trust to support with the costs of setting up items

It should be noted that the Setting Up Home Allowance is to a maximum of £3,000 and aims to cover the essentials needed

Kitchen Items
washing Machine
fridge/freezer
Cooker
Microwave/airfryer
Kettle
Toaster
Sauce pans
Crockery
Cutlery
Kitchen utensil (Baking trays, Knives, chopping boards mixing bowls etc)
Hoover
Clothes airer
Iron and Ironing Board
Kitchen Bin
Mop and Bucket
Brush and Dustpan
Tea towels
Torch

Bedroom
Bed and Mattress
Wardrobe
Chest of Drawers
Bedside Cabinet
Curtains/Blinds (including poles)
Pillows and Duvets
Sheets/ pillow cases and duvet covers
Lounge
Sofa
Coffee table/TV stand
Blinds/Curtain (including poles)
TV
Soft furnishings - rugs/cushions/lamps/picture
Dining room table and chairs
Bathroom
Bath Mat
Towels
Shower curtains
Toilet Brush
Start Up Pack
basic cleaning products for Kitchen/ bathroom etc
Emergency number list/ information about how heating works/placement of stop cocks
Carbon Monoxide Detector & Fire Blanket
Smoke Alarms - link in with local fire brigade
Ancillary costs
Removal costs
Household (Contents) Insurance for 1st year
TV licence for the 1st year
Gas and Electric Top Up for first week
Wifi for the first year subject to reasonable costs (social traffifs should be explored)

Appendix 4

CHECKLIST FOR 16 AND 17 YEAR OLDS IN FURTHER EDUCATION/TRAINING

PAYMENTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN FURTHER EDUCATION/TRAINING COURSES

Type of Accommodation	Income Maintenance
All Accommodation	£67.20 per week

INCENTIVES FOR FURTHER EDUCATION/TRAINING COURSES

Education Maintenance Allowance is no longer payable to young people in Education; however, young people at college or in training after Year 11 may receive an EDUCATIONAL BURSARY direct from their college or training provider.

The amount received is determined by each individual college or training provider. It is the responsibility of the Social Worker or the Leaving Care Support Worker to discuss with the young person's college or training provider, the individual entitlement of support and provide the relevant information required to ensure access to the bursary and support on offer.

If a young person has no entitlement to a bursary or there is no bursary on offer from the education or training provider, an EDUCATION INCENTIVE can be paid by the NAS on top of Income Maintenance to encourage young people to continue in education.

It is paid pro rata depending on the number of hours for the course.

Incentive for attending education/training.	£30.00 per week (24hrs) £20.00 per week (16hrs) £10.00 per week (8hrs) £5.00 per week (4hrs)
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Educational/Training Costs

Standard Stationery Costs Educational equipment/Essential Clothing	Approx £50 per academic year, As required and appropriate
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Rent costs	Only rent costs will be met by NAS, should the rent include utilities costs, wifi etc – there is an expectation that the young person pays these costs. If the costs cannot be separated out – then a deduction for the young person's
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	weekly income maintenance will be made.
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Childcare Costs	Need to access Sure Start, College for support
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Appendix 5

CHECKLIST FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AT UNIVERSITY

It is expected that students access all finances available from Student Finance England. This includes student loans and grants where available.

LIVING EXPENSES

NAS weekly living payment in line with Benefits	£67.20 per week
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ACCOMMODATION COSTS

Accommodation costs payable for 52 weeks of the year to cover rent element only. NAS will not pay utility costs, wifi etc	<p>Reasonable costs will be paid – all requests need to be made to finance panel for approval</p> <p>NAS will not pay utility costs, wifi etc, where these are in the rent, the young person will be expected to meet the costs.</p> <p>If the amount cannot be separated from the rent – NAS will deduct £20 per week from the young person's weekly income maintenance</p>
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BURSARIES

<p>NAS will pay a £2000 bursary (in total) over the duration of a young person's degree. Payments should be split across the total number of academic years.</p> <p>If additional bursaries are available from the university, the young person should be supported to apply for these.</p> <p>The value of any bursary received from the university will be deducted from the amount of accommodation costs paid by NAS.</p>
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Any bursary paid as a result of the increased charge of tuition fees will not be deducted from any payments from NAS

TUITION FEES

Tuition fees are not paid by NAS

EDUCATIONAL EXPENSES

3 return journey's home for Easter, summer and Christmas Graduation Costs	Rail/bus fares paid
Graduation Costs	Cost of hiring gown/photo's etc paid

OTHER EXPENSES

All other expenses	Decided by panel on a case by case basis. Full details need to be provided.
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Appendix 6

CHECKLIST FOR YOUNG PEOPLE MISCELLANEOUS PAYMENTS VALID FROM 1st February 2021

Travel

Exceptional Circumstances only. Contact expenses only paid for YP under 18 unless exceptional circumstances.	Cost of bus pass/ticket
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Clothing Payments

Exceptional Circumstances only inc: Fire/Theft, Job Interview, Pregnancy	One off payment of up to £100 pa after needs assessment
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Christmas and Birthday

Christmas	Gift Hamper
Birthday Gift	Gifts to value of £25

Other Costs

Dental/Optical assistance	Use form HG10. Possible additional funding by prior negotiation
Debts/Fines,	No financial assistance given
Loans	No financial assistance given
Prison/YOI	Financed by the Prison Service

Emergency Payments

To alleviate a particular crisis	Up to £20.00 with prior agreement of manager to be put on electricity / gas or supervised food shop
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YOUNG PEOPLE WHO RETURN HOME

At home less than 6 months

If Young Person's parent is eligible to claim Child Benefit for the young person NB Can receive this even if on a care order	Parent/carer can/will claim Child Benefit , Universal Credit (or Child Tax Credits, Housing Benefit)
If Young Person does not qualify for Child Benefit	NAS may pay: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £20.70 to the young person • in exceptional circumstances only, a contribution may be paid to the carer.

At home more than 6 months

If on Care Order	NAS may pay: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £20.70 to the young person • No monies paid to the carer
Not on Care Order/Over 18	Not within the remit of CLC Act and can apply for benefits as anyone else either as part of family or individually.

Appendix 7

Finance panel – CH5 Requests

In order for staff to request financial assistance for a young person, a CH5 request must be made to panel.

Appendix 8

Impact on Benefits for Looked After Children

Term	Meaning	Impact on Benefits
LAC or Looked After Child	Child is looked after by authority.	<p>LA responsible for finances so usually no claim to benefits except DLA (u16) or PIP (16+).</p> <p>LA is the appointee for benefits so must make this claim for the child. See specific section on each benefit below for further advice.</p>
Section 20 of Children Act	<p>(a) Child is looked after under a voluntary arrangement with the parents. Parents have parental responsibility.</p> <p>Or (b) When a child is Looked After where no person with parental responsibility is present for them (see Unaccompanied asylum seeking minor)</p> <p>or (c) A child is placed in a residential accommodation provision to meet additional needs due to disability or health, accumulating</p>	<p>(a) If child is placed with foster carer see “Foster carer” section below. CB can be claimed up to 8 weeks by parent. UC Child element/housing element/CTC must be adjusted immediately by informing relevant benefit authority.</p> <p>(b) If UASM, see section below.</p> <p>(c) Parent can continue to receive CB/UC (child and housing elements)</p>

	above 75 nights per year.	
Section 31 Care Order or Interim Care Order	<p>Courts have given 51% parental responsibility to the local authority.</p> <p>They are Looked After Children. Interim – for a specific time, LA will be returning to court to extend to full care order or to discharge</p>	<p>UC/CTC or HB additions have to stop for children subject to the care order where the local authority provides accommodation and maintains the child out of public funds.</p> <p>CB will usually stop after 8 weeks of child being looked after by the local authority.</p>
Foster carer	<p>Self-employed person who is paid a wage to look after a child. They are paid a fee as well as an allowance specifically to meet the needs of the child.</p>	<p>Can claim CB/UC/CTC/HB for their own children but not a LAC they are fostering. Foster Carer's fee doesn't count towards means tested benefits.</p> <p>Being a Foster Carer of itself will not prevent a claim to UC or old legacy benefits of IS, ESA or JSA for example.</p> <p>Foster carer can claim carers allowance for a disabled foster child.</p> <p>Being a Foster Carer allows one extra bedroom for Housing Benefit size-criteria</p>
Care Leaver	<p>Term for a young person who has left care</p>	<p>See specific status below</p>
Eligible Young person who is 16 or 17	<p>who is still in care and was in care on their 16 birthday, for a period amounting to over 13 weeks.</p>	<p>Cannot apply for most benefits until 18. LA financially responsible. Possible to claim PIP – but seek advice first, if already entitled to DLA.</p> <p>Can claim UC in limited circumstances (see Section 10)</p> <p>Not eligible for Housing Benefit. LA remains responsible for accommodation costs until the young person is 18.</p> <p>Claims in advance to Universal Credit can be made 1 month ahead of 18th birthday</p>

<p>Relevant Young Person Aged 16 or 17</p>	<p>not currently looked after but was looked after for a period amounting to 13 weeks over their 14th birthday until aged 16 or 17.</p>	<p>The same restrictions and exceptions to claiming benefits apply to relevant children as to eligible young person above.</p>
<p>Former relevant young person Over 18 and under 21 (or 25 if in full time education)</p>	<p>Has previously been an Eligible or Relevant Child. LA has duty to support financially to their discretion</p>	<p>Out of work – check eligibility to Universal Credit, whether in or out of work, in or out of education.</p> <p>Former relevant young person can get housing costs added to UC claims.</p> <p>In work/apprenticeship –UC can be paid as a top up to a low wage, especially if young person has rent to pay too.</p> <p>Disability benefits can be paid in or out of work.</p>
<p>Qualifying Young Person</p>	<p>A young person who was in care by the age of 16, but did not meet the 13 week criteria</p>	<p>LA has duty to advise, assist and befriend.</p> <p>From aged 16 a young person may claim Universal Credit in limited circumstances. See Section 10.</p> <p>UC includes help with Housing Costs. Check – if in education and living with someone acting as a parent, could that person claim CB/UC/CTC/HB instead of the young person claiming benefits?</p>
<p>CIN or Child in Need Provision of services under section 17 of the Children Act</p>	<p>CIN status can be achieved with certain characteristics (Asylum seeker; Young Carer; committed a crime; disabled; parent is in prison or non-school attendance) or if an assessment of need identifies that without the provision of services, a child's</p>	<p>CIN young person is in the same position as a Qualifying young person in relation to benefits, as stated above</p>

	development would be impaired.	
Reg 24 Local authority has approved a friend or relative as an appropriate carer	Alternative to a foster carer	If a claim for UC child element/CTC is already in place for the child it has to stop. An existing claim for CB can be paid for up to 8 weeks. Receive an allowance but not a fee.
SGO or special guardianship order	When the local authority and court give parental responsibility to a carer who is not the child's parents.	Local authority may give financial contributions but this is specifically to meet the needs of the child, not a wage. Carer can claim responsibility for the child so can apply for CB UC (or CTC, HB if appropriate)
IFA foster carer or independent fostering agency	Foster carer employed by another agency other than the council	Refer to foster carer section above.
Staying Put arrangement	When a foster placement is extended past aged 18 to support young people who have been looked after	Young person can apply for benefits in their own right including UC with housing costs element. Note that a claim to UC by the young person may impact the carers' income, if they have income-based benefits. Seek advice
Child Arrangement Order (previously known as Residence Order)	Where friend/family carers are given shared Parental responsibility with the parents by a court order.	Normal benefit rules apply, e.g. CB and UC/CTC can be claimed. the parents by a court order
Unaccompanied asylum seeking minor (UASM) Please see 3 different Immigration statuses below	A young person who is an asylum seeker and is present in UK without anyone who holds parental responsibility.	
Discretionary Leave to Remain/ Limited Leave to Remain/	A young person's leave to remain is not permanent. It may be granted whilst their claim is	See Eligible Child. Over 18s may qualify for care leaver support (see definition above)

Unaccompanied Leave to Remain	being processed until aged 17 ½ yro. Complicated – see guidance http://www.rightsnet.org.uk/pdfs/roapbenefits.pdf Children are likely to be LAC under section 20	
Refugee Status or Exceptional Leave to Remain or Humanitarian Protection	Young person granted permission to stay in the UK. .	You can apply for all benefits (depending on usual criteria) May also be entitled to care leaver support.
Appeal Rights Exhausted	Failed claim for leave to remain with no remaining appeals	Person has “No Recourse to Public Funds”. Care leavers (See above definition) are entitled to access leaving care support under the condition of complying with the Home Office Removal Directions. Should a care leaver not comply with the Home Office Removal Directions, Children’s Services can withdraw support, dependent on this withdrawal of funding not breaching on their Rights under European Convention of Human Rights. (Article 6 of Schedule 3 of Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002)
Child for benefit purposes	Aged less than 16yrs old	Cannot claim benefits in own right
Qualifying Young Person for benefit purposes	Aged 16 to under 20 and in, or recently in, education.	If not also a LAC child, then may claim Universal Credit in own right. Parent or Guardian may alternatively claim CB or UC/CTC. Complicated. Seek advice
Qualifying Routes for Universal Credit		The common routes to claiming Universal Credit include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unable to work due to sickness • lone parents • being in full time education and without parental support • Carers

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being pregnant and unable to work due to pregnancy • being within 11 weeks of the baby's due date <p>This is not exhaustive and some routes do not apply to those with LAC status.</p> <p>Universal Credit is a means-tested benefit so other income and capital, including that of a partner, is taken into account in the calculation.</p> <p>See Section 10 for further information.</p>
WELFARE RIGHTS UNIT	For further benefits advice social workers can contact the WRU	For further benefits advice social workers can contact the WRU: 01670 629590