



St. Helens Council

Financial Policy For Young People Leaving Care

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1. Introduction

The Authority has a duty to provide financial support to young people who are care leavers. This policy sets out what financial assistance is available to young people who are leaving care. This will assist them to make informed decisions about their education, employment and training opportunities to help them to achieve economic well-being and make a positive and successful transition to adulthood. In addition the role of the Authority as 'corporate parent' is to mirror the support that a family would provide to their child, including offering a degree of flexibility depending upon the needs of the young person to ensure that they can become financially competent and capable when they reach adulthood.

It is recognised that young people will have different needs. This policy sets out in general terms the level of financial assistance available to young people who are leaving care (see Appendix 1). However, on an individual basis, the specific financial support available to a young person will be based on the Assessment of Need that has been undertaken with the young person, parents, carers, extended family and all relevant professionals. A Pathway Plan will be developed which will specify the financial assistance that will be available to the young person in accordance with this policy; including the conditions on which the financial assistance is made available, the frequency of and arrangements for payments, the sanctions to be applied should the financial assistance be abused and the process of reviewing progress against the Pathway Plan.

The policy has been developed in accordance with:

- a) The Children's Act 1989
- b) The Children Leaving Care Act 2000
- c) The Children Act 2004
- d) Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers
- e) Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010

2. Definition of Who Is Eligible For Support

The Children Leaving Care Act 2000 created four categories of care leaver who are entitled to support after their sixteenth birthday. The extent of the Authority's financial responsibility towards a young person will be determined according to these categories.

Eligible Young Person

An eligible young person is one who:

- Is aged 16 or 17
- Has been looked after by the local authority for a period of at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 (some of this period being after their 16th or 17th birthday)

Relevant Young Person

A relevant young person is one who was previously an eligible young person but who is no longer looked after and is under the age of 18.

Former Relevant Young Person

A former relevant young person is one who has reached the age of 18 but not 21 and who was eligible and / or relevant prior to becoming 18. Where a young person is being supported with education or training they remain a former relevant young person to the end of the agreed programme, even where that takes the young person beyond the age of 21.

Qualifying Young Person

A qualifying young person is one who doesn't meet the criteria for being an eligible young person but who is or was a looked after young person.

3. Financial Support for Eligible Young People Who Remain Looked After In Placement

Eligible young people who remain in their foster placement or residential care placement will have their accommodation costs met by the Authority. They will continue to receive Birthday and Christmas Allowances. Eligible young people who are earning an income, or are in receipt of means tested benefits, will be expected to make a contribution towards their accommodation and maintenance, and this will be discussed and agreed as part of the young person's Pathway Plan.

Eligible young people will be supported to pursue education, training and employment. The Government's 16-19 Bursary Fund provides a bursary of £1200 (2016/17) per year to young people in care and care leavers and it is expected that transport, meals, books and equipment costs will be met from this bursary. Young people will be assisted to apply for a bursary from the relevant school, college or training provider.

As specified in a young person's Pathway Plan, financial support may also be available to assist with:

- The cost of maintaining contact with family and significant others;
- Social activities, hobbies and cultural activities / outings;
- Maintaining a young person's cultural and religious needs;
- Costs of obtaining important documents associated with identity ie birth certificate and one additional form of identification.
- The cost of travel in relation to attending job / university interviews.

Eligible young people will be entitled to membership of the Authority's Go Active programme which will enable them to use specified leisure facilities within the borough. For young people resident outside of the borough, then it is possible to arrange access

to equivalent leisure facilities in their area. The extent to which facilities are used will be monitored and the Authority may withdraw membership if usage levels are low.

4. Financial Support for Eligible and Relevant Young People Living Independently

The Authority will fund the cost of appropriate accommodation for young people up to the age of 18 yrs. Young people who are earning an income, or are in receipt of means tested benefits, will be expected to make a contribution towards their accommodation and maintenance, and this will be discussed and agreed as part of the young person's Pathway Plan.

The Authority will maintain eligible and relevant young people who live independently by giving them a maintenance allowance which is equivalent to the prevailing Job Seekers Allowance benefit rate for a single person under the age of 25. In addition, financial support will be made available to young people to assist with costs associated with special needs such as disability and pregnancy. These will be identified as part of the young person's Assessment of Need and agreed as part of the Pathway Plan.

Eligible and relevant young people who live independently are entitled to Birthday, Christmas and Clothing Allowances.

Eligible and relevant young people will be supported to pursue education, training and employment. The Government's 16-19 Bursary Fund provides a bursary of £1200 (2016/17) per year to young people in care and care leavers and it is expected that transport, meals, books and equipment costs will be met from this bursary. Young people will be assisted to apply for a bursary from the relevant school, college or training provider.

As specified in a young person's Pathway Plan, financial support may also be available to assist with:

- The cost of maintaining contact with family and significant others;
- Social activities, hobbies and cultural activities / outings;
- Maintaining a young person's cultural and religious needs;
- Costs of obtaining important documents associated with identity ie birth certificate and one additional form of identification.
- The cost of travel in relation to attending job / university interviews.

Eligible and relevant young people will be entitled to membership of the Authority's Go Active programme which will enable them to use specified leisure facilities within the borough. For young people resident outside of the borough, then it is possible to arrange access to equivalent leisure facilities in their area. The extent to which facilities are used will be monitored and the Authority may withdraw membership if usage levels are low.

5. Financial Support for Former Relevant Young People

Once a young person reaches the age of 18 they are able to claim the same range of benefits as other adults. Former relevant young people will be advised regarding claims

for their housing benefit and will be responsible for their own rent and household bills. Support will be given to young people to assist them to apply for suitable housing in order to meet their needs. A young person may be eligible to continue to reside with their foster carers beyond the age of 18 in accordance with the Authority's Staying Put Policy.

Former relevant young people will receive a Birthday Allowance on their 18th birthday in line with eligible and relevant young people. In addition, a Christmas Allowance will be paid on the first Christmas following their 18th birthday. Former relevant young people in custody who would otherwise have received the allowance will receive the allowance if they are released within 3 months.

Support and advice will be provided to assist young people wishing to pursue education and training opportunities. The Government's 16-19 Bursary Fund provides a bursary of £1200 (2016/17) per year to young people in care and care leavers and it is expected that transport, meals, books and equipment costs will be met from this bursary. Young people will be assisted to apply for a bursary from the relevant school, college or training provider.

Financial support may be available in respect of accommodation costs for rental properties where such support is not available from other sources (eg a deposit / bond or contribution towards advance rent requirements). It should be noted that the Council will not act as Guarantor for rental properties.

Financial support may be available in respect of the purchase of educational materials, equipment, specific clothing and transport where such support is not available from other sources. In addition, a bursary may be available towards the cost of the course. The level of financial support will be discussed and agreed as part of the young person's Pathway Plan.

The Authority will assist former relevant young people in respect of motor vehicle lessons subject to the following criteria:

- The young person is at least 18 years of age;
 - The young person is engaged in full-time education, employment or training;
 - There is no assessed misuse of drugs or alcohol in respect of the young person;
 - Motor vehicle lessons will be delivered through an approved provider and arranged by the Authority;
 - The number of lessons provided will not exceed 20;
 - The cost of one driving test (theory and practical) will be met by the Authority.
- The Authority will not fund the cost of any additional tests that may be required.

Former relevant young people will be entitled to membership of the Authority's Go Active programme which will enable them to use specified leisure facilities within the borough. For young people resident outside of the borough, then it is possible to arrange access to equivalent leisure facilities in their area. The extent to which facilities are used will be monitored and the Authority may withdraw membership if usage levels are low.

6. Financial Assistance to Qualifying Young People

The primary financial support role for qualifying young people is the responsibility of the Department for Work and Pensions. In exceptional circumstances the Authority may provide financial assistance where this is deemed necessary to protect the welfare of the young person and where it cannot be made available by any other agency.

The Authority will fund the cost of appropriate vacation accommodation for qualifying young people who are in higher education where the young person is not eligible to claim relevant benefits or is not in receipt of any other source of income.

7. Setting Up Home Allowance

An allowance of £2,000 will be made available to eligible, relevant and former relevant young people to assist them in setting up their own home. The allowance will be provided to children and young people to ensure appropriate equipment and household items are obtained.

In addition to the setting up home allowance, an additional allowance may be provided where the young person is a parent (or expectant parent) of a child who is under the age of one at the time the young person moves into the accommodation; and where the child resides with the young person. This allowance is able to be accessed no earlier than 11 weeks before the expected due date of the baby. The allowance is to assist with the additional household needs of a baby / child and may be paid if no such assistance is available from the Benefits Agency.

8. EET Incentives

An incentive payment of £10 per week will be available to relevant and former relevant care leavers who are engaged with education or training. Payments will be paid retrospectively at the end of every half term to ensure that full attendance of the course is maintained. This will be monitored by the young person's social worker or personal adviser. This incentive payment only applies whilst the young person continues to attend education or training. In addition to this, travel costs (usually in the form of a bus pass) and subsistence allowance (eg lunch £3 per day) will be made to enable the young person to attend their place of education or training.

This allowance should only be paid if no financial assistance is available from other sources.

9. Higher Education

Accommodation

Former relevant young people are entitled to financial assistance (based on relevant halls of residence / local rented accommodation rates, whichever is less) to subsidise their accommodation costs whilst attending their place of higher education.

Care leavers in Higher Education have access to, and will be expected to apply for, student loans along with any other young person in full-time higher education.

Bursaries

Where a former relevant young person is attending a course of higher education that is at least two academic years duration and fits the criteria set out within the Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998 (4), St Helens Borough Council will pay a bursary. Arrangements for paying the bursary will be agreed and set out within the Pathway Plan. The bursary entitlement is £2,000 and will be paid in equal instalments annually spread over the course.

A computer and printer will be provided to the young person along with an entitlement to a book allowance (£150 maximum per year) and a stationery / printer ink allowance (£100 maximum per year).

Vacation Accommodation

Financial support will be provided for vacation accommodation for care leavers in Higher Education up to the age of 25. This will be to a maximum of the single person rent level for the area where the young person wishes to spend their vacation. There is an expectation that the care leaver will supplement their loans and grants wherever possible by part-time employment.

The local authority will only assist in contributing to the cost of one type of accommodation during this time (i.e. rent will not be paid for both higher education accommodation and accommodation elsewhere). Social workers and Personal Adviser should confirm that the young person is attending higher education, in order for the criteria for the term break provision to be met. Proof of such attendance must be obtained from the young person or the education provision e.g. attendance records or coursework marks.

10. Apprenticeships

If special equipment is required for a traineeship / apprenticeship, the provider should be approached in the first instance. If equipment is not provided, and depending on an assessment of need, it may be provided by the Local Authority.

Further support will be considered following an assessment of need if it is evidenced that the young person would be financially worse off by accepting the apprenticeship as opposed to attending a part time course with less prospects or by not participating at all in employment, education or training. This will be considered on a case by case basis.

11. Emergency Assistance

The Authority may also provide emergency funds to assist a young person in exceptional circumstances where this is deemed necessary. Such assistance will only be made

available when other possibilities have been considered and where the young person has taken all reasonable steps to remedy the particular situation. Advice and guidance will be available to a young person to ensure he / she does not become reliant on emergency assistance. Assistance may be given in the form of vouchers or a food parcel.

12. Complaints

If a young person is not happy with the financial support offered to them they should attempt to resolve the disagreement through their social worker or the Team Manager of the Young People's Team. If the complaint cannot be resolved in this way the young person can make a complaint via the Authority's Complaints Procedure.

The young person can access advocacy via The Children's Rights Officer at any stage.

**FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE
AS AT APRIL 2016**

Description	Amount
Maintenance allowance for eligible and relevant young people living independently (equivalent to the prevailing Job Seekers Allowance rate for a single person under the age of 25)	£57.90 per week (2016/17)
Clothing allowance for eligible and relevant young people living independently	£240 per year
Birthday allowance for eligible and relevant young people	£101.16 per year
Christmas allowance for eligible and relevant young people	£101.16 per year
Setting up home allowance	£2000
Additional setting up home allowance if young person is an expectant parent or parent of a child under the age of one.	£250
Support for Young People in Higher Education	
Accommodation costs (equivalent to the basic halls of residence cost at the university to be attended)	
Bursary (paid in instalments over the duration of the course)	£2000
Laptop computer and printer	Provided by the Authority
Book allowance	£150 per year maximum
Stationery including printer ink if required	£100 per year maximum

Notes:

Financial assistance in relation to higher education as set out above will be paid where funding from other sources eg the educational establishment, is not available.
Financial assistance will only be made available subject to provision of receipts / proof of expenditure.