

# **Services for Oxfordshire Young People Leaving Care**

## **Transition to Adulthood (Leaving Care) Financial Policy and Guidance 2023 – 2024**

**Draft: Four**  
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**Introduction:**

Section 1 applies to 16 & 17 year olds living in semi-independent and independent settings (supported accommodation) who are primarily the responsibility of the Children We Care For Teams and the Children With Disabilities Teams. Section 2 applies to 18 to 21/25 year olds who are primarily the responsibility of the Leaving Care Teams (and, in certain circumstances an Adult Service), Section 3 and the appendices cover young people aged 16 to 21/25. All allowances should be based on an assessment of need linked to the individual circumstances of the young person.

**Background and Context:**

Oxfordshire County Council has several responsibilities to care leavers which include the provision of maintenance and accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds and financial support to enable young people to make a successful transition from 'care' to adulthood; these responsibilities depend upon age and circumstance. In addition, there is a requirement to support young people to develop financial capability and money management skills and gradually help them to take more responsibility for their personal finances.

This policy outlines the arrangements that Oxfordshire County Council has in place to meet these duties and responsibilities and how it supports young people to make a positive financial transition from care to independence.

**Notes and Implementation Considerations:**

1. All allowances should be based upon an assessment of need and the young person's social worker (up to age 18) and personal adviser (over 18) should ensure that any allowances are detailed and be set out in the young person's Pathway Plan. The Plan must also highlight any attached conditions, how payments will be made, the frequency of payments, when they will be reviewed and when they will cease. Allowances are conditional on reasonable engagement in the Pathway Plan.
2. By the age of 16, all young people (with some exceptions for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) should have a National Insurance Number and relevant identity documents, including photographic evidence to ensure they can register for housing, set up a bank account and prepare for a welfare benefit/universal credit claim. **The social worker must ensure these forms of documentation are in place.**
3. All young people should, where possible, have a savings/bank account by the age of 14 at the latest, and where appropriate all allowances should be paid to young people through their account. **The social worker should ensure a savings/bank account is in place.**
4. The allowances contained in section 1 of this Leaving Care Finance Policy apply to a) young people aged 16 & 17 who are looked after, b) young people deemed Eligible, c) young people who are deemed Relevant and who are living in semi-independent placements or independent accommodation which is not registered under the Care Standards Act 2000 and therefore not inspected by Ofsted. The allowances contained in section 2 and 3 apply to all Former Relevant Children and

the allowances in section four apply to all Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant Children (See Appendix One for definitions of the different categories of care leavers.

5. Subject to, and depending upon an assessment of need, Qualifying Children may be entitled to the same level of support as Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant Children, this will be dependent on their individual circumstances.
6. **This policy does not apply to young people (aged 16 & 17) living in fostering or residential placements.** There is a separate policy that applies to such young people; please refer to a) the policy covering foster care allowances for children/young people or b) the policy covering residential allowances for children/young people for further information.
7. It is a requirement that allowances in this financial policy are reviewed annually by the Head of Service and are aligned with current welfare benefit/universal credit rates for young people under the age of 25.
8. Certain groups of looked after children (CWCF) and care leavers aged 16 & 17 are eligible to claim welfare benefits (lone parents and sick and disabled young people). Where young people are eligible to claim benefits, support from the social worker or personal adviser should be provided to maximise their benefit income (currently, Universal Credit). Where young people aged 16 & 17 are in receipt of welfare benefits, leaving care personal allowance will not continue. Where young people are earning via part-time employment or where they are receiving a traineeship/apprenticeship allowance the approach set out above also applies. i.e., all leaving care allowances except personal allowance according to the earnings threshold/sliding scale in Appendix L will continue as needs assessed during pathway planning.
9. Looked after children and care leavers who are UASC are entitled to the same allowances as any other looked after child or care leaver until the age of 18. However, after the age of 18, allowances and benefits for this group of young people may be affected and limited because of their immigration status.
10. The allowances set out in the following sections apply to all young people who are deemed Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant and are dependent on an assessment of need and their legal and immigration status. All allowances can also be applied to Qualifying Children, subject to a full assessment of their circumstances and needs.
11. All allowances should be reviewed every 6 months as part of the Pathway Plan Review.
12. Wherever possible (particularly when obtaining Setting Up Home Allowances), VAT should be reclaimed on all purchases (that are VAT rated). A VAT receipt is required for all purchases made with a purchase card. When purchasing with all other payment methods a receipt with a VAT number is required for items up to £250.00 and a full VAT receipt is required for items over £250.00. If there is any

doubt about the VAT treatment for any item or the documents required to satisfy the Council's financial requirements, advice should be sought from the Council's finance team. The responsibility for obtaining VAT receipts rests with the designated case holding worker.

### **Legislation:**

13. This policy has been prepared in compliance with the Children Act 1989 and supplementary covering young people who are also deemed care leavers. This includes the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers 2010 (Revised 2015 and 2022) regulations and guidance volume 3.
14. The headings used within the policy are taken from the legislation and guidance listed above.

### **15. Document Structure:**

- Section 1 – Children Looked After – Eligible and Relevant (and Qualifying) Children aged 16 & 17.
- Section 2 (A & B) – Former Relevant (and Qualifying) Children aged 18 to 21/25.
- Section 3 – Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant (and Qualifying) Children aged 16 to 21/25.
- Section 4 – Appendices - Categories of Care Leavers, Asylum Seeking Children & Young People, National Insurance Numbers and Leaving Care Finance Chart.

### **Assessing the Provision of Allowances for 16 & 17 Year Olds (not in foster care or residential care)**

- **Eligible and Relevant Children aged 16 & 17 -**
- **Children Looked After aged 16 & 17 who have not been looked after for the pre-requisite 13 weeks which is required for a child to be deemed an Eligible or Relevant Children.**

Young people looked after and leaving care aged 16 & 17 (except for Qualifying Children – identified in section 24 of the Children Act 1989) are entitled to a weekly Leaving Care Personal Allowance.

**All other allowances are based on an assessment of need and will vary between young people.** For example, travel allowances associated with family contact will vary, depending on the location of family/parents and the cost of travel to the specific location.

Birthday, Christmas/festival and other allowances are not provided to children placed/living at home and with parents where this creates inequity with siblings who are not looked after. (See Appendix D).

The payments for young people noted in the policy are available to all 16 or 17-year olds subject to an assessment of need.

The Care/Pathway Plan **must** be used to evidence which allowances will/will not be provided, the level of the allowances and the reasoning behind granting/not granting the allowance.

## **Assessing the Provision of Allowances for 18 to 21/25 Year Olds**

- **Former Relevant Children Section 23C (Children Act 1989) aged 18 to 21, or until the education or training course being undertaken on their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday is completed.**

The majority of young people leaving care aged 18 should be financing themselves through the following:

- a) Employment;
- b) Education allowances;
- c) Welfare benefits (currently, Universal Credit).

Following an assessment of need and depending on a young person being engaged in education or training some of the allowances set out in the policy may be provided. The Pathway Plan **must** be used to evidence which allowances will/will not be provided, the level and the reasoning behind granting/not granting the allowance:-

- **Former Relevant Children – Section 23CA and Section 23CZB - Care Leavers aged 21 to 25 (Section 23CA and Section 23CZB) – Children Act 1989**
  1. Young people returning to the responsible authority (Oxfordshire County Council) to resume education or training and requesting financial support will have an assessment of need undertaken by a member of the Leaving Care Services will have an assessment of need within 3 months of request.
  2. Young people returning to the responsible authority to request a more general leaving care service will be provided with practical support to assist them to address specific needs or requirements, access universal services and become self-sustaining, rather than being provided with financial support.

## **Assessing the Provision of Allowances covering Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant Children Section 23C, 23CA, 23CZB (Children Act 1989) - Aged 16 to 21/25**

### **Setting Up Home Allowance - Section 23C, 23CA & 23CZB**

Young people can access the Setting Up Home Allowance between the ages of 16 and 21/25 when they move to unfurnished semi-independent or independent accommodation. Where a young person moves to semi-independent accommodation at age 16/17 it is recommended that only a small proportion (up to £500) of the allowance is used and the majority of the allowance is retained for when they move to independent accommodation. The Pathway Plan **must** be used to set out what items a young person needs in the semi-independent or independent accommodation that they are moving to, based on the items already contained in the accommodation and the items the young person may already have.

The Setting Up Home Allowance is divided into several components.

- Setting Up Home Allowance;
  - TV licence – provided once.
  - Household Items provided over a period of time.



- Contents insurance provided once.
- Cooker fitting, by an approved installer - provided once.
- Removal costs - provided once.
- Health and Safety Pack – provided once.
- Setting Up Home Starter Pack – provided once.

For exceptional circumstances see Section 3.

## Section 1

This section applies to Children Looked After and those deemed Eligible and Relevant (Aged 16 and 17) who are living in semi-independent and independent placements. i.e.

- Section 31 'Care Orders'– Eligible children (and those who have not been looked after for 13 weeks)
- Section 20 'Accommodated' – Eligible children (and those who have not been looked after for 13 weeks)
- Young people previously looked after – Relevant children - Section 23A

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| <p>Accommodation and Placements.</p> <p>Where young people are moving into private sector accommodation the rent level must be within the Local Housing Allowance rate for the given area.</p> | <p>Placement and accommodation costs to be met in full for young people up to the age of 18. Where young people are moving into private sector accommodation the rent level should (wherever possible) be within the Local Housing Allowance for that area. Any requirement to provide a deposit and rent in advance must be clarified prior to the tenancy agreement being authorised by the Head of Service (CWCF).</p> <p>From age 18, Housing Benefit/Universal Credit Housing Element for private sector tenants who rent from a private landlord is calculated using the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates. The Valuation Officer sets the level of the LHA for the different types of property in each LHA designated area; these are known as Broad Rental Market Areas. This is determined by post-code, not council boundaries, as some councils might have 2 or 3 BRMA's. The same process and figures are used for Universal Credit housing costs.</p> <p>If rent exceeds LHA, an assessment of need should be undertaken regarding the young person's ability to sustain the overall rent level. In exceptional circumstances, the young person will be supported to apply for discretionary housing payments. These payments are time limited.</p> <p><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/claiming-discretionary-housing-payments/claiming-discretionary-housing-payments">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/claiming-discretionary-housing-payments/claiming-discretionary-housing-payments</a></p> <p>Under LHA, payments will generally be made directly to the tenant unless they are particularly 'vulnerable'. Care leaver status would, in principle, enable a young person to qualify for having his or her LHA paid directly to the landlord. However, the intention of paying LHA directly to tenants is to encourage responsibility for paying the rent themselves.</p> <p>The maximum weekly LHA rates in Oxfordshire from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 are:</p> |             |

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| <p>Accommodation and Placements.<br/><i>Continued</i></p> | <p>Cherwell Valley:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• shared accommodation £78.02</li> <li>• one-bedroom accommodation £149.59</li> </ul> <p>Oxford City:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• shared accommodation £118.87</li> <li>• one-bedroom accommodation £178.36</li> </ul> <p>South Oxfordshire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• shared accommodation £78.59</li> <li>• one-bedroom accommodation £155.34</li> </ul> <p>Vale of the White Horse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• shared accommodation £118.87</li> <li>• one-bedroom accommodation £178.36</li> </ul> <p>West Oxfordshire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• shared accommodation £78.59</li> <li>• one-bedroom accommodation £126.58</li> </ul> <p><b>Please note:</b><br/>The postcode of the actual property address should be used to check which 'Broad Rental Market Area' rate covers that area and address. For example, some parts of one local authority area may come within neighbouring BRMA's.</p> <p>Current rates for all LHA areas can be checked via the Valuation Office Agency website:<br/><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-housing-allowance-lha-rates-applicable-from-april-2023-to-march-2024">Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates applicable from April 2023 to March 2024 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a><br/>or via<br/><a href="http://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/search.aspx">http://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/search.aspx</a></p> <p>There is also an absolute cap on Local Housing Allowance for each property size within the private sector.</p> <p>For general information about care leavers and the Local Housing Allowance visit:<br/><a href="https://lha-direct.therentservice.gov.uk/Secure/pdfs/TRSHB(LHA)2CL.pdf">https://lha-direct.therentservice.gov.uk/Secure/pdfs/TRSHB(LHA)2CL.pdf</a></p> <p>Young people leaving care living in the private rented accommodation are exempt from the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) up to their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday (from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2021); therefore, they are eligible to rent private sector accommodation up to the 1-bedroom Local Housing Allowance rate. From their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday, care leavers will only be eligible for housing benefit (or UC housing element costs) up to the shared room rate but may be eligible for discretionary housing payments (DHP's) in some circumstance. Some care-leavers (those</p> |  |
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| <p>Accommodation and Placements.<br/><i>Continued</i></p> | <p>who have lived in certain hostel accommodation) may be entitled to a one-bedroom rate or higher e.g., if severely disabled or if they have a child or a partner up to age 35.</p> <p>In the majority of social housing (council and housing association), the full rent will be covered by the Housing Element of Universal Credit.</p> <p>In exceptional circumstances Children’s Services will act as a trustee or guarantor for young people following an assessment of need and all other possible trustee/guarantors being explored and ruled out. Prior to agreeing to act as a trustee/guarantor, the scope of what is being covered by the trustee/guarantor needs to be fully identified and authorised, i.e., a) rent, b) damages etc, and what are the limits to any liability. In principle, Children’s Services would be acting as a trustee/guarantor for the rent. In situations where Children’s Services has acted as a trustee/guarantor for 16 and 17 year olds, a new tenancy agreement should be produced when the young person reaches their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. This is particularly important where young people are living in private accommodation. The liability and responsibility for the condition and the cost of the accommodation should be transferred to the young person at 18 (apart from NRPF cases). Where necessary Children’s Services will pay for the new tenancy agreement. In all cases, either the landlord’s guarantor agreement, or an agreement produced by the legal services team should be used and checked and authorised by the legal services team.</p> <p>When young people move into privately rented accommodation their social worker or personal adviser should take pictures on their phone or portable device that show the condition of the property and any items that are included in the rent/inventory. In principle, the letting agent will expect their inventory to be completed; a note should be made of any damaged or missing items which should then be registered with the letting agent. The pictures should be sent to the young person and landlord and stored in their case records. This will assist with negotiating with the landlord if there are problems regarding the condition of the property and the return of the deposit when the young person leaves the property.</p> |  |
| <p>Deposit and Rent in Advance.</p>                       | <p>Where a young person has access to housing authority or housing association independent accommodation a deposit and rent in advance should not be provided.</p> <p>In exceptional circumstances and depending on an assessment of need a deposit and rent in advance may be considered if a young person would be at risk in a) housing authority or housing association independent accommodation, b) where it can be demonstrated that a private sector option is preferable and appropriate and c) where a private sector option is the only available provision.</p>  |  |

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| <p>Deposit and Rent in Advance.<br/><i>Continued</i></p>           | <p>Where young people are moving into independent accommodation, workers should check if homeless prevention or DHP funding can be applied. Where needed, a deposit and rent in advance will be provided if the rent level falls within the given Local Housing Allowance rate for that area. If the rent is above the LHA rate, a risk assessment must be completed, and authorisation must be sought from the Head of Service (CWCF).</p> <p>Social workers/personal advisers should check if a 'Rent Deposit Scheme' or 'Bond Scheme' exists in the area the young person is aiming to live and/or what 'Rent Deposit Protect Scheme' the letting agent/landlord uses.</p> <p>In circumstances where Children's Services is providing the deposit, or is providing a bond guarantee, the deposit/bond guarantee should be in the name of Oxfordshire County Council. Many local authority housing departments operate Deposit Guarantee Schemes that offers landlords a legally binding deposit bond in place of a cash deposit.</p> <p>From April 2007, landlords and agents have, by law, had to sign up to one of three Government-approved schemes when they take a deposit. These schemes aim to ensure that letting agents, landlords and tenants have access to independent deposit protection. Personal advisors and/or social workers must ensure that the deposit is protected.</p> <p>The Tenant Fees Act 2019 came into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2019 and as result tenancy deposits are capped, and most fees charged in connection with a tenancy are banned.<br/><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tenant-fees-act-2019-guidance">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tenant-fees-act-2019-guidance</a></p> <p>Private sector landlords are required to provide a copy of the 'How to Rent' Leaflet to all tenants.<br/><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-rent">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-rent</a></p> |  |
| <p>Care Leavers Personal Allowance (CLPA)<br/>£67.20 per week.</p> | <p>The Care Leavers Personal Allowance according to the sliding scale in Appendix L is provided to young people, i.e., those who are studying, undertaking an apprenticeship, undertaking paid or unpaid training, voluntary work, those employed and those looking for employment.</p> <p>In situations where young people are not involved in any education, training, employment or voluntary activity and/or are not engaging with the CWCF service the allowance could be paid at, or in association with meeting their social worker or accommodation worker. Paying the Care Leavers Personal Allowance directly to the young person may be beneficial in situations where they are reluctant to engage, are at risk and/or where meeting them directly on a regular basis would be beneficial.</p>   |  |

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| <p>Care Leavers Personal Allowance (CLPA)<br/><i>Continued</i></p>                          | <p>This allowance is provided for up to 5 weeks after the young person has attained the age of 18 (whilst Universal Credit is being claimed). The allowance can be paid via BACS, a card payment or in vouchers, depending on an assessment of need and the requirements and circumstances of the individual young person.</p>  |  |
| <p>Initial Clothing Allowance<br/><br/>Up-to £200.00 Depending on an Assessment of Need</p> | <p>In circumstances where young people become looked after and are placed in semi-independent or independent accommodation, they will be provided with an initial Clothing Allowance subject to an assessment of need.</p> <p>The Initial Clothing Allowance is paid in situations where young people become looked after with insufficient clothing for everyday needs. When a young person is first looked after the social worker/personal adviser should make a list of the clothing that the young person has and another list setting out what clothing is required and the cost. The list and costing should be submitted to the Team Manager or Head of Service (CWCF) for approval. A list of minimum clothing requirements is available via Team Managers to ensure a consistent and equitable approach is applied. See below for broad/basis requirements which include:</p> <p>Winter coat, hat, gloves, scarf, waterproof shoes/boots, two pair's shoes/trainers, socks/underwear/ knickers/ bra's/underpants/ boxershorts/pyjamas/three jumpers / tops /five t-shirts/three pairs of jeans/trousers/leggings/skirts/dresses/two shirts/long-sleeved t-shirts/blouses/tops/thermal shirt/ sportswear/swimwear.</p> |  |
| <p>Clothing Allowance<br/><br/>£25.00 per calendar month</p>                                | <p>£25.00 per calendar month clothing allowance (up to £300.00 per year).</p> <p>The arrangements for providing and spending the clothing allowance should be set out in the young person's pathway plan. This could be paid to the young person, weekly, monthly, quarterly and/or can be provided via a supervised/supportive shop.</p>   |  |
| <p>Savings Allowance</p>  | <p>All children looked after who have been in 'Care' continuously for 52 weeks are given a Junior ISA via the Share Foundation. The Department for Education put £200.00 into the Junior ISA.<br/><a href="#">The Share Foundation</a></p> <p>£5.00 per week to be added to young person's Junior ISA. For the first 52 weeks of being a child looked after the savings will be retained by the finance team and will be added to the Junior ISA when set up. Young people are able to access their Junior ISA on reaching age 18. Pathway Plans should set out how much is in the ISA and if the amount may impact on benefit entitlement or represent a risk of exploitation etc and how any issues/risks will be managed/mitigated.</p> <p>See Savings Policy in development</p>   |  |

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| <p>Lone Parents Entitled to Welfare Benefits</p>  | <p>Lone parents are eligible to claim welfare benefits from the birth of their baby.</p> <p>Social workers/personal advisers should support young people to maximise any benefit income (Child Benefit, Health Start Vouchers and Universal Credit).</p> <p>The Leaving Care Personal Allowance will cease when the first benefit payment is received.</p> <p>It should be noted that a claim for a means-tested benefit will entitle the young person to submit a claim for 'Sure Start' Maternity Grant', this is paid for the first/oldest child and provides £500.00 for essential items associated with having a new child.</p>  |  |
| <p>Young Parent Support Grant</p> <p>Up To £300.00 – One-Off Payment</p> <p>New Baby Gift - £20.00</p> <p>Young Parent Travel</p> | <p>The Young Parent Support Grant is available up to 8 weeks before the young parents 'due date' and should be used alongside the 'Sure Start' Maternity Grant to help prepare for the birth of the baby.</p> <p>The 'Sure Start' Maternity Grant is provided once for the first/oldest child and can be accessed once a claim has been lodged and up to 26 weeks after the birth date.</p> <p><a href="http://www.gov.uk">Sure Start Maternity Grant: Overview - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a></p> <p>Social workers/personal advisers should support young parents to access free resources to support parenting should as new-born child's 'goody packs', Health Start Vouchers etc.</p> <p><a href="http://www.gov.uk">Browse: Financial help if you have children - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a></p> <p>Oxfordshire Children's Service will provide a new baby gift and card up to the value of £20.00.</p> <p>Subject to an assessment of need, young parents of children under two will be provided with public transport costs to attend child related services. Where the child of a care leaver is subject to a statutory plan, the travel costs will be covered by the team holding the plan.</p> |  |
| <p>Sick or Disabled Young People Entitled to Welfare Benefits</p>   | <p>Social Workers/Personal Advisers should support young people to maximise any benefit income eg application for Disability Living Allowance (DLA)/Personal Independence Payment (PIP)). The YP will receive Universal Credit in place of the weekly allowance.</p>  |  |

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| <p>Young People Detained in YOI, STC, SCH or in Hospital</p> | <p>Young people who are remanded, sentenced and/or detained in prison, a young offender's institution, a secure training centre or secure children's home (16 &amp; 17 Year Olds) will be provided with up to £10.00 per week pocket money allowance and up to £25.00 per calendar month clothing allowance subject to an assessment of need (and where there is no remuneration/clothing provision at the individual institution [YOI, STC, SCH]).</p> <p>Different types of Secure Estate (YOI) provision have pocket money and clothing allowance remuneration schemes linked to engagement in education, training, or positive activities. The provision of a Leaving Care Personal Allowances should not create a disincentive for a young person to engage in such activities. At the point of remand or sentence (custody) the placement planning meeting/detention planning meeting/review should set out what allowances will be provided by the institution and if these will be topped up by Children's Services to the levels above (£10.00 and £25.00).</p> <p>Upon release, young people will be able to access the initial clothing grant (subject to an assessment of need and the young person requiring clothing).</p> <p>Where no remuneration scheme exists for those who are in custody, the allowances will be provided by Children's Services. How the allowances are provided and in what form, should be based on an assessment of need, the rules of the institution and a risk assessment of the young person's situation.</p> <p>Where a remuneration scheme exists that provides less than £10.00 per week the allowance from the institution can be topped up to £10.00 per week by Children's Services, subject to a risk assessment and assessment of need.</p> <p>Upon being sentenced, allowances continue for Eligible and Relevant Children subject to the remuneration approach provided by the establishment as mentioned above. Upon being sentenced, allowances only continue for Qualifying Children subject to an assessment of need, their parental situation, as well as the remuneration provided by the establishment as set out above.</p> <p>Young people who are detained in an NHS provision or contracted out NHS service provision will be provided with the above allowances based on an assessment of need and risk, how these are provided should be set out in the individual placement plan and pathway plan. This group of young people are also likely to be eligible for Universal Credit on limited capability grounds, Social Workers/Personal Advisers should support young people to make a claim. Where young people lack 'Capacity' to make or manage a claim, support may be required regarding the management of the Universal Credit.</p> |  |
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| <p>Young People Detained in YOI, STC, SCH or in Hospital<br/><i>Continued</i></p>                      | <p>Where family members are in receipt of welfare benefits, prison visits and contact can be facilitated by the 'Assisted Prison Visits Scheme' allowances provided by the DWP. Travel costs for family members not in receipt of welfare benefits may be provided following an assessment of need and an assessment of the frequency.<br/>For detailed guidance please see Appendix C.</p>  |  |
| <p>Young People Placed with Parents / Living at Home</p>   | <p>Looked after children (Eligible) placed at home under placement with parent regulations and care leavers (Relevant) living at home: -<br/>If the young person is engaged in education or training and was living with the parent prior to the age of 16, the parent is likely to be eligible to claim Child Benefit and Tax Credits or Universal Credit (subject to being eligible to claim Universal Credit).<br/><br/>If the young person: a) returns to a parent after the age of 16, b) remains looked after, c) is a relevant care leaver, e) is not engaged in education or training, the parent is unlikely to be eligible to claim Child Benefit or Tax Credits/Universal Credit and f) the young person is unlikely to be eligible to be eligible to claim benefits in their own right, in which case, the leaving care financial policy will apply.<br/><br/>For detailed guidance please see Appendix D.</p> |  |
| <p>Qualifying Children</p>   | <p>Dependent on an assessment of need, which includes an evaluation of all income, Qualifying Children may be entitled to all allowances.<br/><br/>For detailed guidance please see Appendix B.</p>  |  |
| <p>Birthday Allowance<br/>17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday<br/><br/>£50.00 for Gift/s.</p> | <p>A gift, or gifts, to the value of £50.00.<br/><br/>The birthday allowance will only be paid to young people who remain in active contact with their social worker/personal adviser and who are actively engaged in the pathway planning process. Where there may be risks associated with providing the birthday allowance (finances), the pathway plan should set out how any risks will be managed and mitigated.<br/><br/>This is provided to young people living in a semi-independent or independent setting. Young people living in Foster Care or a Children's Residential Unit will receive a birthday allowance from that setting.</p>   |  |
| <p>Christmas/Festivals<br/>£50.00 for Gift/s.<br/>Age 16 &amp; 17</p>                                  | <p>The Christmas/festival allowance will only be paid to young people who remain in active contact with their social worker/personal adviser and who are actively engaged in the pathway planning process. Where there may be risks associated with providing the birthday allowance (finances), the pathway plan should set out how any risks will be managed and mitigated.</p>  |  |

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| <p>Christmas/<br/>Festivals<br/><i>Continued</i></p>  | <p>The Christmas/festival allowance will only be paid to young people who remain in active contact with their social worker/personal adviser and who are actively engaged in the pathway planning process. Where there may be risks associated with providing the Christmas/festival allowance (finances), the pathway plan should set out how any risks will be managed and mitigated. The social worker/personal adviser should assess any associated risks.</p> <p>Young people will be given a choice as to when their festival allowance is to be provided in accord with their faith. If they do not have a preference, the allowance should be made available at Christmas to ensure that they receive their entitlement. The allowance can be spread over several festivals/events.</p> <p>This is provided to young people living in a semi-independent or independent setting. Young people living in Foster Care or a Children’s Residential Unit will receive a Christmas/festival allowance from that setting.</p>   |  |
| <p>Travel and<br/>Family Time<br/>Costs</p> <p>Stagecoach Bus<br/>Pass</p> <p>Travel for<br/>Education,<br/>Training and<br/>Employment</p> | <p>All young people living within the Oxfordshire area will be provided with a Stagecoach Bus Pass (local area megarider pass). This will enable young people to remain in touch with family, extended family, former foster carers, significant friends and their social worker/personal adviser.</p> <p><a href="http://stagecoachbus.com">18 and under student tickets and passes   Oxford   Stagecoach (stagecoachbus.com)</a></p> <p>Where young people are placed or are living outside of the Oxfordshire area, family contact and education, training and employment related travel allowances and expenses may be provided following an assessment of need.</p> <p>Travel may also be funded by an education or training provider subject to compliance with any requirements in the young person’s Learner Agreement.</p> <p>Where resources are not available from the training/education provider and the young person is earning under £150.00 (NET) per week they will be able to access:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A bus pass covering the route from their home to training/education establishment.</li> <li>2. A bicycle package including a bike, helmet, lights, jacket, and lock (£300.00), supplemented by a bus pass for November, December, January, February. Young people can add to the £300.00 in order to purchase an improved bicycle.</li> </ol> <p>Where one off travel is approved, train, tram and bus tickets should, where possible, always be booked, or, purchased in advance to obtain discounted fares. Young people should be advised on how</p> |  |

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| <p>Travel and Family Time Costs<br/><i>Continued</i></p> <p>Phone Contact</p> <p>UASC Contact</p>   | <p>discounts can be obtained and how tickets can be sent to mobile phones and other computer media thus achieving further discounts. In exceptional circumstances, travel costs may be met via the provision of travel warrants.</p> <p>To enable young people to remain in touch with family, extended family, former foster carers, significant friends, and their social worker/personal adviser a £10.00 per month phone allowance will be provided subject to an assessment of need.</p> <p>Following an assessment of need, Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children aged 16 &amp; 17 years can be provided with a £20.00 per month phone card/contact allowance where they have significant family members overseas (this replaces the £10.00 per month phone allowance highlighted above).</p>   |  |
| <p>Social Activities and Leisure</p> <p>One-off costs of obtaining the Pass</p> <p>Local Council Passport to Leisure (or actual cost) if one available. Plus up to £50 per month – Verified Activity.</p> | <p>Where appropriate and dependent on an assessment of need, Children’s Services will pay for the membership of a hobby or leisure club and contribute towards the cost of equipment or special clothing/fees or contribute towards the cost of a social activity. This could include the cost of trial sessions and a contribution to travel costs.</p> <p>Children’s Services will assist young people to obtain a local council Passport to Leisure Pass (for example, Max Card, Fusion Pass, Slice Card), for the area where they are placed. Young people should be encouraged and assisted (via their Pathway Plan) to explore the leisure facilities that accept the Max Card, Fusion Pass, Slice Card, or the relevant scheme if placed outside of Oxfordshire or alternatively £50 could be used to purchase a gym membership.</p> <p><a href="https://mymaxcard.co.uk/">https://mymaxcard.co.uk/</a><br/><a href="https://www.fusion-lifestyle.com/our-locations/oxford/">https://www.fusion-lifestyle.com/our-locations/oxford/</a></p> <p>Financial assistance provided to pursue hobbies, leisure interests and social activities should be governed by the principle that these activities can be afforded by the young person at the age of eighteen, when they take over financial responsibility for their own affairs.</p> <p>Young people should have access to at least one leisure/hobby/sports activity per week to ensure social inclusion.</p> <p>The allowance is provided where young people are undertaking a named and verified leisure activity.</p> |  |
| <p>Life Chances / Social Activity / Summer Activity Grant</p>   | <p>Oxfordshire Children’s Services will provide up to £100.00 for a major life chance / social activity / summer activity once per year. The activity should be undertaken with a social worker, leaving care personal adviser, ex foster care or another key individual. The</p>   |  |

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| <p><i>Continued</i></p> <p>Up to £100.00 per Year – One Off Payment</p> <p>16 and 17 Year Olds</p> | <p>activity could range from a visit to the theatre, sporting event, art gallery or a day trip to a city to visit several museums etc.<br/>The allowance is dependent on an assessment of need and an assessment of the suitability of the activity.</p> <p>Depending on an assessment of need and an assessment of the suitability of the activity/s, the allowance could be provided as two payments of up to £50.00 each.</p> <p>The allowance should be used to fund the activity and refreshments for the young person and social worker/personal adviser/foster carer and the travel costs for the young person. Travel costs for the social worker/personal adviser/foster carer should be claimed via the staff travel budget.</p>  |  |
| <p>Key Documents<br/>£130.00</p> <p>£75.20</p> <p>£72.00</p>                                       | <p>Children’s Services will purchase either a passport or pay for a passport renewal (including paying for the check and send facility) for each young person up to the age of 21. (All young people should have a valid passport provided by Children’s Services up to at least their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday).</p> <p>In addition, Children’s Services will purchase a birth certificate for each young person (if they do not have one) up to the age of 21.</p> <p>In circumstances where an Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking young Person loses their Biometric Card, Children’s Services will pay for one replacement (£75.20), subject to an assessment of need.</p> <p>Children’s Services will purchase a travel document for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (Young People) dependent on an assessment of need (£72.00).</p>   |  |
| <p>Education, Training, Voluntary Work and Employment.</p> <p>Learner Agreements.</p>              | <p>All education, training, and employment support (practical and financial) will be based on an individual learner agreement developed between the young person and their social worker/personal adviser and including input from the virtual school and the young person’s education/training tutor/mentor. The agreement will set out the level of practical and financial support to be provided by all parties and will include learning goals and targets and attendance/academic requirements. Failure to comply with the learner agreement may result in financial and practical support ceasing and a requirement to leave the course or activity.</p> <p><b>Education and Training</b><br/>Young people who are undertaking an education course or training activity will receive the Leaving Care Personal Allowance. Additionally, young people who are undertaking full time education courses or unpaid training courses (minimum 12 hours study/training and contact time) are eligible for the 16-19 bursary (£1,200.00 per</p> |  |

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| <p>Education, Training, Voluntary Work and Employment.<br/><i>Continued</i></p> | <p>year, administered by schools and colleges usually given in kind (bus pass, lunch) scheme. However, if match funding for a different course that does not attract the bursary to be considered.</p> <p>Young people are expected to attend the nearest college for the given course they wish to undertake. In exceptional circumstances, and following an assessment of need, the nearest college rule can be waived, where it can be demonstrated that it is not in the best interest of the young person to attend the nearest college.</p> <p><b>Apprenticeships</b><br/>The National Minimum Wage of £5.28 per hour applies to apprentices from April 2023. The wage applies to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all apprentices aged under 19</li> <li>• apprentices aged 19 or over in the first year of their Apprenticeship</li> </ul> <p>This should mean that apprentices get a weekly wage of at least £200.64 (38 hours per week).</p> <p>National Minimum Wage 2023-2024:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>25 and over</td> <td>21 to 24</td> <td>18 to 20</td> <td>Under 18</td> <td>Apprentice</td> </tr> <tr> <td>£10.42</td> <td>£10.18</td> <td>£7.49</td> <td>£5.28</td> <td>£5.28</td> </tr> </table> <p>Young people (children looked after and care leavers up to age 25) who are undertaking an apprenticeship are eligible for a one-off £1000.00 (£3000.00 from August 2023) Apprenticeship Bursary (paid via the Apprenticeship Provider), in addition, the Apprenticeship Provider also receives £1000.00 to support the apprentice; this is provided once and usually within the first three months.</p> | 25 and over | 21 to 24 | 18 to 20   | Under 18 | Apprentice | £10.42 | £10.18 | £7.49 | £5.28 | £5.28 |  |
| 25 and over   | 21 to 24   | 18 to 20    | Under 18 | Apprentice |          |            |        |        |       |       |       |  |
| £10.42  | £10.18   | £7.49       | £5.28    | £5.28      |          |            |        |        |       |       |       |  |
| <p>Education, Training and Employment Related Support</p>                       | <p>Children’s Services may provide equipment and travel costs for education or training courses and employment opportunities of the young person’s choice depending on an assessment of need. Where appropriate, Children’s Services will consider funding extra tuition.</p> <p>Funding may be provided for subsequent education or training courses and/or for changed courses depending on an assessment of need and the young person demonstrating a commitment to continuing education or training and consistent attendance (minimum 85%).</p> <p>If special equipment is required for a traineeship/apprenticeship the provider should be approached in the first instance. If equipment is not provided, and depending on an assessment of need, it will be provided by Oxfordshire Children’s Services.</p>   |             |          |            |          |            |        |        |       |       |       |  |

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| <p>Education, Training and Employment Related Support<br/><i>Continued</i></p> | <p>Young people who are undertaking full time (at least 12 hours of attendance/contact time) further education courses are entitled to a grant to assist with:<br/>Stationery, educational visits, books and equipment, computer and I.T. equipment based on evidenced need.</p>   |  |
| <p>FE Grant - Stationery, Educational Visits, Books and Equipment</p>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stationery, Educational Visits Grant, Books and Equipment Grant and I.T. Grant Equipment of up to £225.00 per academic year.</li> </ul> <p>The Grant is per academic year, is not transferable and is only available for stationery, educational visits, books, general equipment, and computer and I.T. equipment and is subject to an assessment of need.</p>   |  |
| <p>Commencing Work Grant<br/>£150.00</p>                                       | <p>Children’s Services will purchase equipment and/or clothing to assist the young person with their chosen employment e.g., interview clothes, overalls, protective clothing, depending on an assessment of need. Maximum Commencing Work Grant £150.00 if not available from the employer, training provider or apprenticeship provider). This is provided as a one off. Social workers or personal advisers should ascertain the costs and seek approval from the CWCF Team Manager.</p>    |  |
| <p>Prom Activity Up – To<br/>£200.00</p>                                       | <p>Children’s Services will support young people to participate in a ‘Prom Activity’, costs can include dress/suit hire or purchase, transport, prom tickets and associated costs. Social workers or personal advisers should ascertain the costs and seek approval from the CWCF Service Manager.</p>   |  |
| <p>Child Care</p>  | <p>Childcare costs should be accessed through the Care to Learn Fund <a href="https://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn">https://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn</a></p>   |  |
| <p>F.E. &amp; H E Computer Grant Up-To £500.00 – One-Off</p>                   | <p>All young people entering further education (level 2 or above) or higher education will be assisted to access/purchase a tablet, lap-top or computer by way of a one-off grant of £500.00 to young people age 16 to 21/25).</p> <p>Young people should submit a list of requirements regarding equipment, course books etc., to their social worker or leaving care personal adviser for approval.</p>  |  |
| <p>Apprenticeships</p>   | <p>Care leavers are a priority group for the Vulnerable Young Person’s 16 to 19 Bursary, £1200.00 per year paid by the 6<sup>th</sup> form or college.</p> <p>Care leavers are eligible for a £1000.00 Apprenticeship Bursary (£3000.00 from August 2023), paid by the apprenticeship provider; in addition, the providers get £1000.00 to support the young person. The Bursary is paid once by the provider between age 16 and up to 25 and after completion of 12 weeks of the Bursary.</p> |  |

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| <p>Course Completion</p> <p>Re-engagement Grant – Up To £150.00</p> | <p>£500.00 for successful completion of a further education / short course. The goal to be achieved must be set out in the pathway plan prior to commencing the course.</p> <p>Up to £150.00 paid over three months to support active re-engagement in an education, training, or employment activity – this should be provided as a set of incentives and rewards geared to the young person’s interests to support and encourage re-engagement and motivation.</p>  |  |
| <p>Digital Connectivity</p>   | <p>Young people who are seeking employment and claiming Universal Credit may be eligible for six months of free broadband internet access. Several broadband and mobile providers also have reduced rate tariffs (£10.00 per month) for those claiming Universal Credit (Talk Talk, BT, Virgin Money).</p> <p>Where a young person is on a low wage or has a low income and doesn’t qualify for a reduced rate tariff, Children’s Service will provide six months of digital access. This may be provided via the Care Leavers Covenant Offer or directly by Children’s Services.</p> <p>Subject to an assessment of need and where young people require a mobile phone to remain in contact with their social worker/personal adviser, and/or, make/sustain a Universal Credit claim they will be provided with a basic Smart Phone. This can be provided once and in an emergency.</p>  |  |
| <p>Introduction to Driving Allowance</p> <p>Age 17 (to 25)</p>      | <p>Subject to an assessment of need, Children’s Services will provide/pay the costs of obtaining the following ‘Introduction to Driving’ package to assist a young person’s employability and to provide an additional identity document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. 1 provisional driving licence;</li> <li>B. 1 theory test, upon evidence of a pass mark on a practice tests;</li> <li>C. 1 theory test booklet/app;</li> <li>D. Support for driving lesson funding, young person to contribute £200 to purchase the first block lessons, and OCC will fund additional 10 lessons.</li> <li>E. 1 practical driving test.</li> </ul> <p>The Introduction to Driving package is available to young people aged 17 to 25 and is conditional on the individual young person having been engaged in education, training, an apprenticeship, or employment (full time) for at least 3 months. The lessons must be provided by an approved instructor and should be used for motor car lessons.</p> <p>Depending on circumstances and an assessment of need, lone parents and young people with SEND may be exempt from the requirement to be engaged in education, training, or employment (and having completed at least 6 months). Consideration of eligibility and</p> |  |

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| Introduction to Driving Allowance<br><i>Continued</i> | funding of lone parents and SEND young people should be presented to the Head of Service (CWCF).   |  |
| Counselling and Therapeutic Needs                     | <p>Oxfordshire Children’s Services will assist young people to access counselling and/or therapeutic services via universal health services and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).</p> <p>Young people living in Oxfordshire can use the MIND Wellbeing Service for Oxfordshire. Follow link below:<br/>Follow Link - <a href="#">Children and Young People — Oxfordshire Mind</a></p> <p>Social workers will support young people to attend these services and the young person’s GP in order to assist and support them to access counselling and therapeutic services.</p> <p>Where appropriate and dependent on an assessment of need, and where CAMHS services and universal services are not available, a request for additional support should be submitted to a Team Manager or Head of Service (CWCF) for consideration and approval.</p>   |  |
| Health Needs  | <p>Oxfordshire Children’s Services will assist young people to access services to meet their health and developmental needs via the ‘looked after’ children health provision and via universal health services.</p> <p>Social workers/personal advisers should complete form HC1 (SC) for all 16 &amp; 17 year olds. The HC1 (SC) form enables young people to obtain an NHS low-income exemption certificate. This will provide free or reduced cost dental, optician, and prescription services. In situations where young people require specific health items these will be considered following an assessment of need.</p> <p>Social workers/personal advisers will support young people to attend their GP’s in order to assist them to access appropriate health related services.</p> <p>In exceptional circumstances and where appropriate, and dependent on an assessment of need, Oxfordshire Children’s Services may provide funds to secure additional health services. This will require consideration and approval from a Team Manager or Head of Service (CWCF).</p> <p>Where young people need regular medication/prescriptions and do not qualify for free prescriptions consideration should be given to purchasing a Prescription Prepayment Certificate. These cost</p> |  |



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| Health Needs<br><i>Continued</i> | £30.25 for 3 months and £108.10 for 12 months, thus capping the quarterly or yearly cost of prescriptions.<br><br><a href="#">NHS Prescription Prepayment Certificates (PPCs)   NHSBSA</a>  |  |
| Special Needs Costs              | Oxfordshire Children's Services will assist young people to access services aimed at addressing any additional/special needs and depending on an assessment of need, may assist in providing resources to address the identified need. For example, a hearing assist doorbell where these would not be provided by Occupational Therapy, or related services.   |  |
| Cultural Needs                   | Oxfordshire Children's Services will assist young people to access services aimed at meeting their cultural needs. Where appropriate, and dependent on an assessment of need, Oxfordshire Children's Services will fund services aimed at meeting identified needs i.e., skin and hair care, dietary requirements. This will require consideration and approval from a Team Manager or Head of Service (CWCF).  |  |
| Religious Needs                  | Oxfordshire Children's Services will assist young people to access services aimed at meeting their religious needs. Where appropriate, and dependent on an assessment of need, Oxfordshire Children's Services will fund services aimed at meeting identified religious needs. This will require consideration and approval from a Team Manager or Head of Service (CWCF).  |  |
| Personal Luggage<br>£50.00       | Luggage – all young people moving to independence or between placements must have appropriate personal luggage to help with the move. At least two items of appropriate personal luggage should be available to each young person (suitcase, holdall, rucksack). Oxfordshire also supports the Madlug initiative to support care experience young people access stylish luggage.<br><a href="https://www.madlug.com/">https://www.madlug.com/</a>             |  |
| Consultation with Young People   | Young people will receive a financial allowance of £5.28 per hour plus expenses when undertaking consultation exercises.<br><br>Payments to young people who undertake consultation exercises can be paid in cash or vouchers.<br><br>Expenses (travel/subsistence) related to enabling young people to participate in consultation exercise will be provided following an assessment of need (i.e., if public transport is available or taxis are required). |  |

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| <p>Preparing the Initial Benefit Claim</p> | <p>All young people will receive £67.20 per week for the first 5 weeks after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, whilst they establish their Universal Credit claim and await their first payment. The allowance should only be paid after checking the progress of the young person's Universal Credit claim with the DWP and on the basis that the young person does not take up a Universal Credit Advance. Young people making their initial claim for Universal Credit will have to wait approximately 5 weeks for their first payment (a calendar month plus 7 days).</p> <p>As a rule, the Care Leavers Personal Allowance is always paid in advance and welfare benefits/Universal Credit is always paid in arrears. Even where a benefit claim is submitted in advance of the young person's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and verified on the young person's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, they will have to wait at least 5 weeks for the first Universal Credit payment. As such, and where the young person does not take a Universal Credit Advance, Children's Services will extend the pre 18 allowance for up to five weeks whilst a young person's Universal Credit claim is established and in payment.</p> <p>Supporting information and identity documents should have been obtained by the social worker/personal adviser prior to a young person's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, in preparation for a claim that should be started 4 weeks in advance of the 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and workers should contact the DWP one week after the young person's birthday to verify the completion of the claim and the first payment date. The rules that enable care leavers to submit a claim 28 days prior to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday is contained in the DWP guidance covering ADM – A-2048. If the young person has not received their first benefit payment after five weeks, they should be supported to claim a Universal Credit Advance from the DWP by their personal adviser.</p> <p>If the young person applies for a Universal Credit Advance at the start of their claim, the 5-week benefit waiting allowance will not be provided. The aim of the 5-week benefit waiting allowance is to ensure young people do not need to use the Universal Credit Advance, and subsequently have a reduced benefit rate to repay the advance.</p> <p>For the second and subsequent claims: If claiming Universal Credit, the young person can immediately ask for an advance payment from the DWP, of up to 100% of the likely Universal Credit award. This will then be recovered directly from their Universal Credit payment (by the DWP) in 12 equal parts over the next year.</p> |  |
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| <p>Emergency Payments</p> <p>Payment Process</p> <p>16 &amp; 17 Year Olds</p> | <p>Oxfordshire Children's Services will provide a maximum of 3 emergency cash payments in any 6-month period. These payments will be dependent on an assessment of need and will not exceed £20.00 per payment.</p> <p>Where a young person requests an emergency payment due to difficulties with budgeting, the social worker/personal adviser will explore with the young person how their £67.20 weekly Care Leavers Personal Allowance is provided.</p> <p>The second request for an emergency payment will result in the young person being given two choices on how their £67.20 will be provided:</p> <p>Option 1      Two payments of £15.00 and one payment of £37.20 per-week.</p> <p>Option 2      Social worker/personal adviser accompanying the young person shopping, ensuring that £35.00 is spent on food, 15.00 is spent on utilities/bills and the remaining £17.20 is given in cash.</p> <p>Where a young person requests more than three emergency cash payments in any 6-month period, they can be assisted with a maximum of two emergency food parcels each of which will have a utilities component. Each food parcel and utility component should not exceed £20.00 in value, i.e., £5.00 utility top-up and £15.00 food. Emergency payments and food parcels are discretionary and will only be provided following an assessment of need. In situations where young people make regular requests for emergency payments their Care Leavers Personal Allowance will be provided as three weekly payments (see above); this will mean young people will have a maximum of three days between payments.</p> <p>In situations where young people have lost or had money/items stolen they must obtain a crime reference number before an assessment of need and compensatory payment is considered.</p> |  |
| <p>Exceptional Needs Payment</p>  | <p>Where appropriate, and dependent on an assessment of need, Oxfordshire Children's Services may provide funds for exceptional needs as a one-off payment.</p> <p>These payments can only be agreed by a Team Manager (CWCF).</p>  |  |

## Section 2

This section applies to Former Relevant Children, 18 to 25 year olds.

### Group A

- Care Leavers Aged 18 to 21, or until the completion of the education course being undertaken on their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday - Former Relevant Children - Section 23 C (1)

### Group B

- Care Leavers Aged 21 to 25 who return to the authority to resume or commence education or training - Former Relevant Children - Section 23 CA (1)
- Care Leavers Aged 21 to 25 who return to the authority to resume a service - Former Relevant Children - Section 23 CZB (1)

| Basis and Amount             | Conditions and Comments   | Budget Code |
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| Accommodation and Placements | <p>Accommodation costs for young people aged 18 and older will only be provided in exceptional circumstances and where authorised via the Placement Resource Panel prior to the young person's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and the case being considered by the Head of Service (Leaving Care).</p> <p>Where eligible all young people should claim the housing element of universal credit or housing benefit.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. See Staying Put policy – young people living in foster care who meet the Staying Put criteria can remain in their arrangement up to 21.</li> <li>2. Supported Lodgings placements are available to all care leavers aged 16 to 25.</li> <li>3. Failed Asylum Seekers (all rights exhausted) with no recourse to public funds will continue to be provided with accommodation subject to a human rights assessment.</li> </ol> <p>In the majority of situations Children's Services is not able to act as a trustee or guarantor for care leavers aged 18 and older. In exceptional circumstances and with agreement from the Head of Service consideration will be given to Children's Services acting as a trustee/guarantor, such as acting as a trustee/guarantor for university accommodation. The nature and scope of the trustee/guarantor must be clarified before any agreement is given, i.e., what is being covered, rent, damages, and what liabilities the trustee/guarantor agreement establishes. In all cases, either the landlord's guarantor agreement, or an agreement produced by the legal services team should be used and checked and authorised by the legal services team (see Trustee and Guarantor Policy in development).</p> <p>See Section One – Accommodation and Placements for LHA rates – pages 10 and 11</p> |             |

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| Deposit & Rent in Advance.   | See Section One – Deposits and Rent in Advance – page 12  |  |
| <p>Care Leavers Personal Allowance Rates.</p> <p>Failed Asylum Seekers with no Recourse to Public Funds.</p> | <p>The CLPA is provided for up to 5 weeks after the young person has attained the age of 18 whilst, they are claiming Universal Credit and whilst they are awaiting their initial payment.</p> <p>It is also paid to failed asylum seeking young people with no recourse to public funds.</p> <p>Young people are provided with £67.20 per week, for 5 weeks if eligible for public funds/service and ongoing if they have no recourse to public funds.</p> <p>See R (SO) v London Borough of Barking &amp; Dagenham 2010 Case Law Judgement.</p> <p><a href="https://www.familylawweek.co.uk/site.aspx?i=ed67968">https://www.familylawweek.co.uk/site.aspx?i=ed67968</a></p> <p>Failed asylum seekers and ‘all rights/appeals exhausted cases’ with no recourse to public funds are provided with the above allowance only after a human rights assessment and until the removal date is reached or the age of 21/25, whichever comes first. It should be noted that a local authority does not necessarily have to wait until the removal date or age 21/25 to withdraw support, for example support could be withdrawn when the former UASC turns 18 if they are All Rights Exhausted (‘ARE’) and have, by then, been given a reasonable time to return home.</p> <p>See Appendix F for Detailed Guidance on UASC</p> |  |
| Initial Benefit Claim  | <p>All young people will receive £67.20 per week for the first 5 weeks after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, whilst they establish their Universal Credit claim and await their first payment. The allowance should only be paid after checking the progress of the young person’s Universal Credit claim with the DWP and on the basis that the young person does not take up a Universal Credit Advance. Young people making their initial claim for Universal Credit will have to wait approximately 5 weeks for their first payment (a calendar month plus 7 days).</p> <p>As a rule, the Care Leavers Personal Allowance is always paid in advance and welfare benefits/Universal Credit is always paid in arrears. Even where a benefit claim is submitted in advance of the young person’s 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and verified on the young person’s 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, they will have to wait at least 5 weeks for the first Universal Credit payment. As such, and where the young person does not take a Universal Credit Advance, Children’s Services will extend the pre 18 allowance for up to five weeks whilst a young person’s Universal Credit claim is established and in payment.</p>   |  |

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| <p>Initial Benefit Claim<br/><i>Continued</i></p>                     | <p>Supporting information and identity documents should have been obtained by the social worker/personal adviser prior to a young person's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, in preparation for a claim that should be started 4 weeks in advance of the 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and workers should contact the DWP one week after the young person's birthday to verify the completion of the claim and the first payment date. Online application can be prepared but it cannot be submitted until their 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday.</p> <p>If the young person has not received their first benefit payment after five weeks, they should be supported to claim a Universal Credit Advance from the DWP by their personal adviser.</p> <p>If the young person applies for a Universal Credit Advance at the start of their claim, the 5-week benefit waiting allowance will not be provided. The aim of the 5-week benefit waiting allowance is to ensure young people do not need to use the Universal Credit Advance, and subsequently have a reduced benefit rate to repay the advance.</p> <p>For the second and subsequent claims: If claiming Universal Credit, the young person can immediately ask for an advance payment from the DWP, of up to 100% of the likely Universal Credit award. This will then be recovered directly from their Universal Credit payment (by the DWP) in 12 equal parts over the next year.</p> |  |
| <p>Council Tax Exemption / Allowance</p>                              | <p>All care leavers aged 18 to 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday, who are the responsibility of Oxfordshire County Council and who are living within the Oxfordshire area, will be exempt from any Council Tax Liability. Where the care leaver is solely liable for council tax, they will be entitled to 100% discount after all statutory discounts, exemptions and before Council Tax Support have been applied. Where a care leaver is jointly liable for council tax, a proportionate award will be made, i.e.: if there are two occupiers, a 50% award will be made.</p> <p>For care leavers aged 21 to 25, application for discretionary reduction needs to be made.</p> <p>Care leavers who are living outside of Oxfordshire will be assisted to claim any local council tax exemption or council tax support available. If there is not reduction available OCC will pay the council tax until the Care Leavers 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday.</p> <p>For young people living in Oxfordshire, the council tax exemption is verified via Children's Services providing a letter to the relevant council tax authority to confirm the young person's eligibility for the exemption.</p>  |  |
| <p>Clothing Allowance<br/>18 to 21<br/>Up To £300.00<br/>Per Year</p> | <p>The arrangements for providing and spending the clothing allowance should be set out in the young person's pathway plan. This could be paid to the young person at the start of the winter and/or, weekly, monthly, quarterly and/or can be provided via a supervised/supportive shop.</p>   |  |

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| <i>Continued</i>  | The provision of the Clothing Allowance is subject to an assessment of need and based on the clothing requirements of the young person.  |  |
| <p>Young Parent Support Grant</p> <p>Up To £300.00 – One-Off Payment</p> <p>New Baby Gift - £20.00</p> <p>Young Parent Travel</p> | <p>The Young Parent Support Grant is available up to 8 weeks before the young parents 'due date' and should be used alongside the 'Sure Start' Maternity Grant to help prepare for the birth of the baby.</p> <p>The 'Sure Start' Maternity Grant is provided once for the first/oldest child and can be accessed from 11 weeks before the 'due date' and up to 26 weeks after the birth date.</p> <p><a href="http://www.gov.uk">Sure Start Maternity Grant: Overview - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a></p> <p>Personal advisers should support young parents to access free resources to support parenting should as new-born child's 'goody packs', Health Start Vouchers etc.</p> <p><a href="http://www.gov.uk">Browse: Financial help if you have children - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a></p> <p>Oxfordshire Children's Service will provide a new baby gift and card up to the value of £20.00.</p> <p>Subject to an assessment of need, young parents of children under two will be provided with public transport costs to attend child related services. Where the child is subject to a statutory plan, the travel costs will be covered by the team holding the statutory Plan.</p> |  |
| Travel – Education and Training   | <p>Where young people are undertaking an education or training activity the cost of travel may be provided by the education or training provider subject to the terms of the young person's learner agreement. Young people who are in receipt of the 16 to 19 bursary should use the bursary / award to cover travel costs. In exceptional circumstances, additional travel costs above the level of the bursary will be provided subject to an assessment of need.</p> <p>Where resources are not available from the training/education provider or DWP, and the young person is earning under £150.00 (NET) per week they will be able to access:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A bus pass covering the route from their home to training/education establishment.</li> </ol>   |  |
| Bike Policy   | <p>A bicycle package including a bike, helmet, lights, jacket, and lock (£300.00).</p> <p>Young people can add to the £300.00 in order to purchase an improved bicycle.</p>  |  |

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| <p>Travel and Family Time</p>   | <p>Subject to an assessment of need, travel costs (public transport/fuel reimbursement) will be provided to support time with family and other important people such as former foster carers. Wherever possible, journeys should be booked in advance (bus and train). The frequency will be agreed between the young person and the personal adviser and will be set out in the Pathway Plan. Up to 3 times a year, booked in advance to obtain maximum discount.</p>  |  |
| <p>Social Activities and Leisure</p> <p>Any One-off cost of the Pass</p> <p>Local Council Passport to Leisure (or actual cost).</p>     | <p>Where appropriate and dependent on an assessment of need, Children’s Services will pay for the membership of a hobby or leisure club and contribute towards the cost of equipment or special clothing/fees or contribute towards the cost of a social activity. This could include the cost of trial sessions and a contribution to travel costs.</p> <p>Up to £50 a month towards leisure activities.<br/> <a href="https://mymaxcard.co.uk/">https://mymaxcard.co.uk/</a><br/> <a href="https://www.fusion-lifestyle.com/our-locations/oxford/">https://www.fusion-lifestyle.com/our-locations/oxford/</a></p> <p>Financial assistance provided to pursue hobbies, leisure interests and social activities should be governed by the principle that these activities can be afforded by the young person at the age of eighteen, when they take over financial responsibility for their own affairs.</p> <p>Young people should have access to at least one leisure/hobby/sports activity per week to ensure social inclusion.</p> <p>The allowance is only provided where young people are undertaking a named and verified leisure activity.</p> |  |
| <p>Life Chances / Social Activity / Summer Activity Grant</p> <p>Up to £100.00 per Year – One Off Payment</p> <p>18 to 21 Year Olds</p> | <p>Oxfordshire Children’s Services will provide up to £100.00 for a major life chance / social activity / summer activity once per year. The activity should be undertaken with a leaving care personal adviser, ex foster care or another key individual. The activity could range from a visit to the theatre, sporting event, art gallery or a day trip to a city to visit several museums etc.</p> <p>The allowance is dependent on an assessment of need and an assessment of the suitability of the activity.</p> <p>Depending on an assessment of need and an assessment of the suitability of the activity/s, the allowance could be provided as two payments of up to £50.00 each.</p> <p>The allowance should be used to fund the activity and refreshments for the young person and social worker/personal adviser/foster carer and the travel costs for the young person. Travel costs for the social worker/personal adviser/foster carer should be claimed via the staff travel budget.</p>   |  |



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| <p>Qualifying Young People</p>   | <p>Dependent on an assessment of need which includes an evaluation of all income, Qualifying Young People may be entitled to all allowances.</p> <p>For detailed guidance please see Appendix B</p>  |  |
| <p>Key Documents<br/>Up to £130.00</p> <p>Up to £75.20</p> <p>Up to £72.00</p> | <p>Children’s Services will purchase either a passport or pay for a passport renewal (including paying for the check and send facility) for each young person up to the age of 21.</p> <p>In addition, Children’s Services will purchase a birth certificate for each young person (if they do not have one) up to the age of 21.</p> <p>In circumstances where an Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking young Person loses their Biometric Card, Children’s Services will pay for one replacement (£75.20), subject to an assessment of need.</p> <p>Children’s Services will purchase a travel document for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (Young People) dependent on an assessment of need (£72.00).</p>   |  |
| <p>Introduction to Driving Allowance</p> <p>Age 17 (to 21)</p>                 | <p>Subject to an assessment of need, Children’s Services will provide/pay the costs of obtaining the following ‘Introduction to Driving’ package to assist a young person’s employability and to provide an additional identity document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. 1 provisional driving licence;</li> <li>B. 1 theory test, upon evidence of a pass mark on a practice tests;</li> <li>C. 1 theory test booklet/app;</li> <li>D. Support for driving lesson funding, young person to contribute £200 to purchase the first block lessons, and OCC will fund additional 10 lessons.</li> <li>E. 1 practical driving test.</li> </ul> <p>The Introduction to Driving package is available to young people aged 17 to 25 and is conditional on the individual young person having been engaged in education, training, an apprenticeship, or employment (full time) for at least 3 months. The lessons must be provided by an approved instructor and should be used for motor car lessons.</p> <p>Depending on circumstances and an assessment of need, lone parents and young people with SEND may be exempt from the requirement to be engaged in education, training, or employment (and having completed at least 6 months). Consideration of eligibility and funding of lone parents and SEND young people should be presented to the Head of Service (Leaving Care).</p> |  |

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| <p>Personal Luggage<br/>£50.00</p>  | <p>Luggage – all young people moving to independence or between placements must have appropriate personal luggage. At least two items of appropriate personal luggage (suitcase, holdall, rucksack). Oxfordshire also supports the Madlug initiative to support care experience young people access suitable luggage.<br/><a href="https://www.madlug.com/">https://www.madlug.com/</a></p>  |  |
| <p>Birthday:<br/>19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and<br/>21<sup>st</sup> Birthday<br/>£50.00</p> | <p>The Pathway Plan should specify whether the allowance is to be given to the young person directly as a gift or via a payment into their account (via BACS), or is used by the personal adviser, staying put carer or previous carer to purchase a gift.</p> <p>The birthday allowance covers the cost of a gift, wrapping and a card.</p> <p>The birthday allowance will only be paid to young people who remain in contact with their leaving care personal adviser and who are actively engaged in the pathway planning process.</p>  |  |
| <p>Christmas and<br/>Festival<br/>Allowances<br/>Age 18 to 21<br/><br/>£50.00</p>                 | <p>The Pathway Plan should specify whether the allowance is to be given to the young person directly as a gift or via a payment into their account (via BACS), or is used by the personal adviser, staying put carer or previous carer to purchase a gift. In effect the Staying Put allowance does not include an element for this specific allowance so will be covered from Leaving Care budget.</p> <p>The Christmas/Festival allowance covers the cost of a gift, wrapping and a card.</p> <p>The Christmas/Festival allowance will only be paid to young people who remain in contact with their leaving care personal adviser and who are actively engaged in the pathway planning process. The allowance can be spread over several festivals/events according to the faith of the young person.</p>   |  |
| <p>Digital<br/>Connectivity</p>   | <p>Young people who are seeking employment and claiming Universal Credit may be eligible for six months of free broadband internet access. Several broadband and mobile providers also have reduced rate tariffs (£10.00 per month) for those claiming Universal Credit (Talk Talk, BT, Virgin Money).</p> <p>Where a young person is on a low wage or has a low income and doesn't qualify for a reduced rate tariff, Children's Service will provide six months of digital access. This may be provided via the Care Leavers Covenant Offer or directly by Children's Services.</p> <p>Subject to an assessment of need and where young people require a mobile phone to remain in contact with their personal adviser, and/or, make/sustain a Universal Credit claim they will be provided with a basic Smart Phone. This can be provided once and in an emergency.</p> |  |

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| <p>Winter Utilities and Heating Allowance</p> <p>£15.00 per Week</p> <p>1<sup>st</sup> year of Independent Living</p> <p>Cost of Living Support</p> | <p>Young people living in independent accommodation who are responsible for, and pay, variable utility/service and heating costs will be provided with a £15.00 per week (£255.00) winter utilities and heating allowance during their 1<sup>st</sup> year (winter) of independent living. The allowance is available from the 1<sup>st</sup> November to the 28<sup>th</sup> February of the first winter they are living independently (4 months [17 weeks]) and is available to all young people.</p> <p>Depending on an assessment of need the allowance can be provided on a weekly or monthly basis. The allowance should be paid directly to the young person's utility provider or credited to his or her electricity/gas payment key/card.</p> <p>Total payment £255.00 during the first year of independent living.</p> <p>For most young people this allowance will be provided between their 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> birthday.</p> <p>Personal advisers will also support young people to access other forms of support to assist with bills, utility and service costs and charges. In Oxfordshire care leavers can access assistance via the Welfare Support Fund.</p> <p><a href="#">Oxfordshire assistance from welfare Support Fund   UK Bill Help</a></p> <p>Personal advisers should assess what support may be available in the area that they young person lives and through any support provided by their landlord and/or via one of the five local district/borough/city councils in Oxfordshire.</p> <p>Personal advisers should also explore what support may be available through the care leavers covenant, and in the area where the young person is living. For example, young people living in the Seven Trent Water area can access reduced rate water charges (70% discount for 18 to 21 year olds and 50% discount for 21 to 25 year olds). The Citizens Advice provides information about support available:</p> <p><a href="https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy/energy-supply/get-help-paying-your-bills/grants-and-benefits-to-help-you-pay-your-energy-bills/">https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy/energy-supply/get-help-paying-your-bills/grants-and-benefits-to-help-you-pay-your-energy-bills/</a></p> |  |
| <p>Counselling and Therapeutic Needs</p>  | <p>Oxfordshire Children's Services will assist young people to access counselling and/or therapeutic services via universal health services and via the Community Mental Health Services (CMHS).</p> <p>Young people living in Oxfordshire can use the MIND Wellbeing Service for Oxfordshire. Follow link below:<br/> <a href="#">Children and Young People — Oxfordshire Mind</a></p>   |  |

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| <p>Counselling and Therapeutic Needs<br/><i>Continued</i></p> | <p>Personal advisers will support young people to attend these services and the young person's GP to assist and support them to access counselling and therapeutic services.</p> <p>Where appropriate and dependent on an assessment of need, and where CMHS and universal services are not available, a request for additional support should be submitted to the Leaving Care Team Manager or Head of Service for consideration and approval.</p>   |  |
| <p>Health Needs</p>   | <p>Oxfordshire Children's Services will assist young people to access services to meet their health and developmental needs via the 'looked after and care leaver' health provision and via universal health services.</p> <p>Personal advisers should support young people to complete an NHS HC1 form for all 18 to 21/25 year olds who are not employed and/or not registered for welfare benefits. This is particularly important for care leavers who are financially maintained by Children's Services (or undertaking higher education courses) and who need to demonstrate their level of income in order to access free, or reduced cost NHS services. The HC1 form enables young people to obtain an NHS low income / exemption certificate. This will provide free or reduced cost dental, optician and prescription services.</p> <p>Personal advisers will support young people to attend their GP in order to assist and support them to access counselling, therapeutic and health services.</p> <p>In exceptional circumstances, where appropriate, and dependent on an assessment of need, Oxfordshire Children's Services may provide funds to secure additional health services. This will require consideration and approval from a Leaving Care Team Manager. This could include a 50% contribution to essential dental work and/or a contribution to prescription glasses or contact lens of up to £60.00.</p> <p>Where young people need regular medication/prescriptions and do not qualify for free prescriptions consideration should be given to purchasing a Prescription Prepayment Certificate. These cost £30.25 for 3 months and £108.10 for 12 months, thus capping the quarterly or yearly cost of prescriptions.</p> <p><a href="#">NHS Prescription Prepayment Certificates (PPCs)   NHSBSA</a></p> |  |
| <p>Special Needs Costs</p>                                    | <p>Oxfordshire Children's Services will assist young people to access services aimed at addressing any additional/special needs and depending on an assessment of need, may assist in providing resources to address the identified need. For example, a hearing assist doorbell where these would not be provided by Occupational Therapy, or related services.</p>  |  |

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| Cultural Needs                                     | Oxfordshire Children's Services will assist young people to access services aimed at meeting their cultural needs. Where appropriate, and dependent on an assessment of need, Oxfordshire Children's Services will fund services aimed at meeting identified needs i.e., skin and hair care, dietary requirements. This will require consideration and approval from a Leaving Care Team Manager and/or the Head of Service.   |  |
| Religious Needs                                    | Oxfordshire Children's Services will assist young people to access services aimed at meeting their religious needs. Where appropriate, and dependent on an assessment of need, Oxfordshire Children's Services will fund services aimed at meeting identified religious needs. This will require consideration and approval from a Leaving Care Team Manager and/or the Head of Service.   |  |
| Further and Higher Education – Overview            | <p>Financial Support for Further and Higher Education courses is available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• up to the young person's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday;</li> <li>• or until the completion of the course following the young person's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday where the course commenced before their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday;</li> <li>• between the 21<sup>st</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> birthday where a young person wishes to resume or commence an agreed programme of education or training between those dates;</li> <li>• until the education or training course is completed following the 25<sup>th</sup> birthday where the course commenced prior to the 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.</li> </ul> <p>All financial support is dependent on an individual assessment of need and on the young person complying with any conditionality attached to the financial support set out in the Pathway Plan.</p> <p>Funding will only be available to repeat the same course in exceptional circumstances and subject to an assessment of need.</p> <p>Children's Services will fund up to five visits to universities where young people are predicted to get grades that are sufficient to apply for university. The visits can be undertaken with social workers, personal advisers, foster carers or residential workers and are aimed at enabling young people to make an informed choice of university and course.</p> <p>For full details see pages 37 to 48.</p> |  |
| Education, Training and Employment Related Support | Children's Services may provide financial assistance for costs associated with education or training courses or employment opportunities of the young person's choice, depending on an assessment of need which includes the course/activity suitability. Where appropriate, Children's Services may consider funding for extra tuition.   |  |

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| <p><i>Continued</i><br/>Learner<br/>Agreements</p>   | <p>All education, training, and employment support (practical and financial) will be based on an individual learner agreement developed between the young person and their social worker/personal adviser and including input from the virtual school and the young person's education/training tutor/mentor. The agreement will set out the level of practical and financial support to be provided by all parties and will include learning goals and targets and attendance/academic requirements. Failure to comply with the learner agreement may result in financial and practical support ceasing and a requirement to leave the course or activity.</p> |  |
| <p>FE and HE<br/>Grant -<br/>Stationery,<br/>Educational<br/>Visits, Books<br/>and Equipment</p> | <p>Further Education and Higher Education Equipment<br/>Young people who are undertaking full time further education courses are entitled to a grant of up to:<br/>- £225.00 Stationery, Educational Visits, Books and IT Equipment Grant.</p> <p>These Grants are per academic year, are none transferable and are only available for stationery, educational visits and books and equipment (assessed each year of the course).</p>   |  |
| <p>F.E. &amp; H E<br/>Computer Grant<br/>Up-To £500.00<br/>– One-Off</p>                         | <p>All young people entering further education (level 2 or above) or higher education will be assisted to purchase or access a tablet or lap-top. The grant of up-to £500.00 will be provided once between the ages of 16 and 21/25.</p> <p>Young people should submit a list of stationary, books and equipment to their leaving care personal adviser.</p>  |  |
| <p>Prom Activity<br/>Up – To<br/>£200.00</p>   | <p>Children's Services will support young people to participate in a 'Prom Activity', costs can include dress/suit hire or purchase, transport, prom tickets and associated costs. Social workers or personal advisers should ascertain the costs and seek approval from the Leaving Care Team Manager.</p>   |  |
| <p>Child Care</p>  | <p>Childcare costs should be accessed through the Care to Learn Fund. Where the young person does not qualify for the Care to Learn Fund and/or requires supplementary funding, this will be provided subject to an assessment of need, checking if Universal Credit can provide support and based on the attendance/commitment of the young person.</p> <p><a href="http://www.gov.uk">Care to Learn: Overview - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a></p>   |  |
| <p>Re-engagement<br/>Grant – Up To<br/>£150.00</p>   | <p>Up to £150.00 paid over three months to support active re-engagement in an education, training, or employment activity – this should be provided as a set of incentives and rewards geared to the young person's interests to support and encourage re-engagement and motivation.</p>  |  |

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| <p>Commencing Work Grant<br/><i>Continued</i></p>   | <p>Children’s Services will purchase equipment and/or clothing to assist the young person with their chosen employment e.g., interview clothes, overalls, protective clothing, depending on an assessment of need. Maximum Commencing Work Grant £150.00 (if not available from the employer, training provider or apprenticeship provider). This is provided as a single one-off payment, or as a series of payments over a period of time.</p>   |  |
| <p>Commencing Work Transitional Payment.</p>  | <p>Where young people commence a job that is monthly paid they will be provided with a transitional payment for four weeks/calendar month equivalent to the prevailing benefit rate (£67.20 per week, £292.11 per calendar month (2023-2024)).</p> <p>Care leavers are a priority group for the Vulnerable Young Person’s 16 to 19 Bursary is provided the 6<sup>th</sup> form or college. We will match fund up to age 19 where this is not given by the provider subject to an assessment of need.</p> |  |
| <p>Apprenticeships</p>  | <p>Care leavers are eligible for a £1000.00 (£3000.00 from August 2023) Apprenticeship Bursary, paid by the apprenticeship provider; in addition, the providers get £1000.00 to support the young person. The Bursary is paid once by the provider between 16 and up to 25.</p> <p>The PA should ensure the provider is aware the young person is a care leaver and the arrangements for accessing the bursary should be set out in the Pathway Plan.</p>  |  |
| <p>FE Completion Grant</p>  | <p>Completion grants: £1000 University or Apprenticeship Level 4-6 successful completion, £750 Level 3 - 4 HE/FE/Apprenticeship completion, (completion grant can be used to supplement 4<sup>th</sup> year of studies if foundation year extends course)</p>  |  |
| <p><b>Education &amp; Training (16 &amp; 17 year olds) Young People Aged 18 and Older</b></p>   |  |  |
| <p><b>Further Education Courses</b></p>   |  |  |
| <p>Children’s Services is committed to assisting and supporting young people to maximise their potential through educational and training opportunities.</p>  |  |  |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Eligible and Relevant young people (16 and 17 year olds) who are studying at sixth form college or further education colleges will be supported via their foster care placements or children’s homes and, for those living in semi-independent and independent accommodation, via their leaving care personal allowance.</li> <li>2. From the age of 18 to the end of the academic year following their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, care leavers who are ‘without parental support’ (estranged from their families) and who are studying full time (12 hours or more of ‘guided learning’) can claim Universal Credit on the grounds of being in ‘Relevant Education’ and they do not have to be</li> </ol> |  |  |

available for employment. Young people can start or change courses at any point up until their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday in order to be eligible for Universal Credit.

3. In situations where young people aged 21 to 25 wish to resume or commence education or training, the following guidelines in regard to financial support will apply (see page 40 and 48);
- Young people returning to the service should initially contact the leaving care duty worker;
  - Funding will be considered by the Education, Training and Employment Panel following an assessment of need (including access to financial resources) and will be based on the motivation and commitment of the young person to undertake, sustain, and complete the course in line with the following principles:
  - Full time courses – Following an assessment of need, young people may be provided with a maximum weekly maintenance grant of £67.20 per week, up to £3,494.40 per year and registration fees grant of up to £1,000.00, full time and £500.00 part time. Young people will be expected to work part time in order to cover their accommodation/rental costs. These grants are subject to young people maintaining 85% attendance, having satisfactory reports from the individual college/establishment, and not having access to other financial resources. Personal advisers will liaise with colleges and/or training providers to ensure satisfactory attendance and progress. As young people will be on a low income, personal advisers should support their students to apply for reduced rate fees. As young people will not be receiving a means-tested benefit; will be in receipt of a low income and are a priority group for learner support funds, personal advisers and students should make timely applications for these funds. Personal advisers and young people should also check if the specific course would qualify for Universal Credit, some non-degree education courses may qualify the young person for Universal Credit where it is deemed that the course is improving their employability and it does not interfere with their commitment to look for work if they are getting Universal Credit on that basis. Lone parents with children under 3 and disabled young people can also undertake courses, as they should be receiving benefits without having to be available or looking for work.
  - Part time courses – One-off grants will be made following an evaluation of the course and an assessment of need of the young person and their financial circumstances. Grants may range from £20.00 to £500.00 to be used to assist with registration fees and equipment costs. Grants will be based on need, motivation to gain educational qualifications and whether the candidate has any education qualifications.
  - A key priority will be to ensure all young people hold a level 2 qualification.

**Returning to Education, Training and Employment (21 to 25)**

- Access arrangements to Higher Education courses are the same as young people aged 18 to 21 (four years entitlement as long as commencement is prior to the 25<sup>th</sup> birthday).

The following activities immediately prior to the start of a resumed or new course will be taken as evidence of motivation and commitment: -

1. Courses of study leading to a level 1 qualification or above;
2. Employment in the field relating to the requested education/training course;



3. Voluntary work relating to the requested education/training course;
4. Training courses relating to the requested education course.

Young people may also be required to demonstrate that they can contribute to the funding package (accommodation/rental costs/needs) via part time employment and/or by accessing Learner Support or Advanced Learner Loans available from Student Finance England (<https://www.gov.uk/further-education-courses/financial-help>). In such circumstances an assessment of financial need will be completed in order to assist the young person with their weekly maintenance.

Following the assessment of need, the request for financial support will be presented to a Education, Training and Employment Panel and each case will be allocated to a Leaving Care Personal Adviser who will develop a Pathway Plan a Learning Agreement and a payment transfer system (generally by regular BACS payments) and a system for monitoring the young person's education/training/employment activity, progress and attendance.

All young people attending further and higher education will be required to sign an authorisation to share information form and will need to agree to their personal adviser liaising with the educational/training establishment in order to support the course and monitor attendance and learning.

## **Financial Support - Traineeships and Apprenticeships**

### **Apprenticeships**

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

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

From the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023, the minimum wage rate is £5.28 per hour for apprentices aged 16 to 18 and those aged 19 or over who are in their first year. All other apprentices are entitled to the National Minimum Wage for their age and can be found at - [www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates](http://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates)

As the apprenticeship is deemed employment, young people will be eligible for a range of benefits, including housing benefit and Universal Credit (housing element of Universal Credit) depending on their circumstances. If the apprenticeship is deemed employment, the young person would not be covered by the age 21-25 Education and Training Care Leaver entitlements.

Apprenticeship Completion Grant - £1000.00 level 4-6, £750.00 level 3, £500.00 level 2.

### **Traineeships and Programme Led Apprenticeships**

These types of traineeships and apprenticeships are provided by a training provider or college, with work experience provided at the establishment or off-site, and are therefore deemed education/training rather than employment. Young people may be eligible for benefits/Universal Credit depending on their age, circumstances and type of course. In general, young people aged 21 to 25 will not be able to access benefits (unless they are parents or have a disability). Young people undertaking these courses are eligible for the '21-25 Oxfordshire Returning to EET support / care leaver entitlements (subject to an assessment of need and the pre-requisite conditions above being met).

### **Financial Support**

Access to financial support will always be dependent on an assessment of the young person's financial circumstances. Where appropriate; young people will be provided with practical support to help them access education, training or benefits funding, rather than via the provision of direct grants. The level of practical support and financial support should be set out within the young person's pathway plan and should also set out any conditionality linked to the support being provided.

## **Higher Education**

### **Student Finance**

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

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

### **Tuition Fees and Tuition Fee Loans**

From September 2023 the maximum tuition fees and tuition fee loan per year is:

- New full-time students £9,250.00
- New full-time students at private university or college £6,165.00

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

### **Maintenance Loans**

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

The maximum maintenance loan in 2023-2024 for students starting courses after the 1<sup>st</sup> August 2023 (per year) is set out below:

- Students studying in London £13,031.00
- Students studying outside of London £9,977.00
- Students living at home £8,399.00

- In the final year of the course the maximum loan rate is reduced by approximately 10%.

### **Loan Repayment**

Graduates repay the combined tuition fee and maintenance loan when they have finished studying and are earning over a given threshold per year. The given threshold, how much is repaid, and the level of interest charged, depends on which 'Loan' Plan (four types) the student is on. This link provides detailed information – [types of student loan plan](#). The monthly repayments are linked to the person's income. After a certain amount of time (30 years for those starting courses in 2022 and earlier and 40 years for those starting courses in 2023), any outstanding loans will be written off if the money has not been repaid.

The threshold for repayment and the level of repayment also depends on which Plan applies and the prevailing interest rates – check below:

[Student Loans Interest Rates and Repayment Threshold Announcement - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

### **Support from Individual Universities**

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

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

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

### **Higher Education Continued**

#### **Access to Learning Fund**

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

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

#### **National Scholarship Programme (NSP)**

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

### **The Care Leavers Higher Education Bursary**

The Care Leavers Higher Education Bursary is provided by the student's local authority (Oxfordshire Children's Services) and is provided as a minimum grant of £2,000.00 throughout the length of the whole course.

### **Grants and Awards From Charitable Trusts**

Trusts and charities provide financial grants and awards to students. Advice about what may be available is available through individual universities or through the Educational Grants Advisory Service (EGAS).

Public libraries should have directories of charitable trusts that provide grants and awards:

- The Educational Grants Directory;
- The Charities Digest;
- The Grants Register;
- The Directory of Grant Making Trusts.

### **General Information**

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

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

Information about additional support to care leavers can be found on the Access and Participation Plans that each institution is required to have. Information can be found on the web site of each institution or via: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/>

### **Higher Education Continued**

#### **General Information**

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

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

Information about additional support to care leavers can be found on the Access and Participation Plans that each institution is required to have. Information can be found on the web site of each institution or via: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/>

#### **Welfare Benefits**

The majority of young people who undertake higher education courses are ineligible for welfare benefits such as Universal Credit, tax credits, Income Support and Housing Benefit/Local Housing Allowance. Certain limited groups of young people who undertake

higher education courses such as lone parents and sick and disabled young people may remain or are eligible for welfare benefits whilst studying. If a young person is entitled to welfare benefits (most likely Universal Credit for all new applicants) they will still receive the Oxfordshire Higher Education Grant with the exception of the Vacation Accommodation element.

Lone Parents and Sick and Disabled Students who are in receipt of Welfare Benefits should check with the Department for Work and Pensions regarding the rules about student finance. Being in receipt of student finances may cause disqualification and/or a reduced entitlement to welfare benefits. Generally, lone parents and sick and disabled young people will be assumed by the DWP to have taken out Student Loans including the Special Support Loan element for those on benefit-level income. Their level of welfare benefit will be calculated by taking into account the loans they receive but not the Special Support element.

Lone Parents (and certain couples with children) may be eligible for the Government's **Childcare Grant** (£188.90 per week for one child and up to £323.85 per week for more than one child) and/or **Parents' Learning Allowance** (up to £1,915.00). Disabled students may be eligible for the **Disabled Students' Allowance**. Students who have adult dependents may be eligible for an **Adult Dependents' Grant (ADG)** (up to £3,354.00 per year) (2023-2024). These grants do not affect welfare benefits.

### **Oxfordshire Children's Services - Higher Education Financial Support**

A Higher Education Grant which includes the Government's Higher Education Bursary can be accessed once (for 4 years) at any point between a young person's 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> birthday (the grant ceases when the young person leaves or completes the course (can recommence/resume prior to the 25<sup>th</sup> birthday).

Given that A level courses qualify for Universal Credit and most Foundation Courses do not, care leavers may find it preferable to undertake A level courses to access University, rather than foundation courses in order to prioritise their four years of Higher Education funding on their chosen Higher Education course.

All young people entering higher education are entitled to:-

1. A one-off Computer Grant for a note-pad or lap-top depending on an assessment of need and if not previously accessed – up to £500.00.
2. Where required, support to have a specialist assessment of dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, autism, ADHD etc, in the first instance the specific institution should be approached.
3. Travel Costs Grant to and from the university at the start and finish of each term and once during each term (6 return journeys per year). In addition, travel costs will be considered where a young person is required to travel to their home area for medical appointments set up prior to moving to university.
4. A moving to University Grant at the commencement of the course – up to £300.00.

## **Oxfordshire Children's Services - Higher Education Financial Support, Continued**

5. A Bus Pass for the University city/town where living.
6. A Leisure Allowance of £50.00 per month.
7. An Equipment, Stationary, Educational Visits, Books, and IT Equipment Grant – up to £225.00 per year. Consideration of financial support to travel to overseas destinations / field trips where it is a requirement of the course.
8. A Higher Education Bursary of £2,000.00 which is provided over the period of a two, three or four year course. Depending on the length of the course the £2,000.00 per course will be constituted of £1,000.00 per year (2 year course) H.E. Bursary, £666.67 per year (3 year course) H. E. Bursary, £500.00 per year (4 year course) H. E. Bursary.
9. A deposit for university or private sector accommodation in the area where studying (if required).
10. A Vacation Accommodation Allowance - Up to the level of the LHA one-bedroom self-contained rate and/or the level of university accommodation (if staying in university accommodation in the vacation). This is provided where there is a demonstrable liability for rent in the young person's name. Subject to approval by a leaving care team manager/ head of service, where there is no liability for rent, but a contribution to living costs is required, a percentage of the contribution can be provided subject to an assessment of need.
11. A Completion Grant of £1000.00.
12. A Graduation Grant to cover the cost of gown hire, official photographs, celebratory event, and celebratory meal with personal adviser – up to £250.00 if not provided by university

➤ Young people applying to and undertaking higher education courses will be required to apply for all available universal student funding i.e., maintenance loans, tuition fee loans, as well as individual establishment bursaries. These loans and grants and the H.E. Bursary should be used by students as their main source of income through-out their term time course of study. This will fund their higher education accommodation, living expenses, travel, equipment, and book needs.

- This amounts to a payment of approximately £5,000.00 per year – depending on location, the need for a deposit, type of accommodation (rent) and the nature of the course.

How the H. E. Bursary and Accommodation Allowance is provided should be set out in the young person's pathway plan.

- Higher National Certificate and Higher National Diploma courses are defined as Higher Education Courses. Both HNC and HND courses often attract a bursary and/or a grant from the individual university.

Young people who remain eligible for means tested welfare benefits are provided with all support with the exception of the Vacation Accommodation Grant.

### **Open University Courses:**

- Open University courses fall outside of the Higher Education schedule as set out above due to the flexible nature of the learning arrangements (time and home based).
- Where the program of study is agreed in the Pathway Plan, the young person will be provided with the £2000.00 Higher Education Bursary spread across the program of study (made up of 8 payments of £250.00), to qualify for the payment the young person must achieve 40 points prior to each payment.
- The young person will also qualify for the Completion Grant of £1000.00 on completion of the course and where they have gained 360 points.
- Given the flexible nature of University Courses it is expected that the young person will be obtaining the majority of their income/living costs from employment.

### **Higher Education – Requirements and Payment Process**

Oxfordshire Children's Services as corporate parents, wants to ensure all care leavers have the best possible chance of success when undertaking a higher education and university course. The following guidance has been developed to provide clarity about the higher education payments process and the eligibility requirements that young people are expected to follow.

The frequency and amount of each payment as well as the method of paying the higher education bursary and allowance should be set out in the young person's Pathway Plan.

All payments are dependent on, and subject to, a young person agreeing to the following requirements:

- Maintaining regular and ongoing contact with their leaving care personal adviser;
- Attending all pre-arranged meetings with their leaving care personal adviser;
- Completing all actions and agreed tasks within the Learning Agreement and education section of the pathway plan;
- Identification of a suitable contact within the university staff/support service to take part in joint meetings in order to ensure educational goals and targets are met and appropriate practical, educational, pastoral and financial support is being provided;
- To agree to regular liaison between the university and leaving care personal adviser, in order to monitor progress, attendance and attainment;
- To inform their leaving care personal adviser and local authority of any change of circumstances (for example contact details, course details) as soon as possible;
- Student Finance England have confirmed that they will fund the course and the young person is deemed a 'Home Student' for the Tuition Fee Loan;
- Having an asylum status that enables them to receive Student Finance England loans and that they are deemed a 'Home Student';
- To focus on educational activities by not undertaking more than twenty hours of employment per week during term time. To understand that in circumstances where more than twenty hours per week of employment is be undertaken, this income will be considered when calculating the level of financial support.

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| <p><b>Higher Education – Requirements and Payment Process - Continued</b></p> <p>All young people attending further, and higher education will be required to sign a consent to share/disclose information form and will need to agree to their leaving care personal adviser liaising with the educational establishment in order to support the program of study and monitor attendance and learning.</p> <p>See Appendix H for Consent to Share/Disclose Information Form.</p> <p>See Appendix I for Higher Education Checklist for Personal Advisers</p> <p><u>Asylum Seeking Young People</u><br/> Young people should only be supported to progress to university/higher education if they have a form of status that gives them access to 'Home Student Status and Fees' and Student England Finances and have a positive status that continues until the course is completed. All support from Children's Services and any other source should be clearly set out in the Pathway Plan. Where young people do not have a status that gives them access to the above forms of financial support, personal advisers will support young people to apply for scholarships, grants and bursaries from voluntary organisations.</p> |   |
| <p><b>Post Graduate Courses</b></p> <p>Children's Services will assist young people to identify financial support and resources to undertake post graduate courses. Generally, vocational post graduate courses are funded by secondment from an employer, or by individual universities providing a bursary to cover course/tuition fees. Children's Services may consider a contribution to post graduate courses following a needs assessment and all avenues of funding being explored. All requests for post graduate funding will be considered by a Leaving Care Team Manager and/or Head of Service, following an assessment of need, which includes checking the start and end dates, whether the course represents a progression from a previous course and the likely outcome at the end of the course.</p>   |   |
| <p>Young People Returning to the Local Authority Aged 21 to 25</p>   | <p>Young people are entitled to resume, or continue, a leaving care service from the age of 21 to 25 on request – 1) for education and training, 2) for general support.</p> <p>The primary purpose of the entitlement to 'general support' for young people aged 21 to 25 is to provide continuity and on-going practical advice and guidance. Where young people require financial support, personal advisers will assist the young person to identify universal sources of financial support to enable young people to be self-sustaining. In very exceptional circumstances and following an assessment of need, a request for financial support (usually provided in kind) will be considered. The assessment and request will be considered by a Leaving Care Team Manager.</p> |



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| <p>Consultation with Young People</p>                      | <p>Young people will receive a financial allowance of £7.49 (18 to 20), £10.18 (21 to 24), £10.42 (25 and over) per hour, (the amount is linked to the prevailing minimum wage for the age of the young person) plus expenses when undertaking consultation exercises.</p> <p>Payments to young people who undertake consultation exercises can be paid in cash or vouchers.</p> <p>Expenses (travel/subsistence) related to enabling young people to participate in consultation exercise will be provided following an assessment of need (i.e., if public transport is available or taxis are required).</p>  |  |
| <p>Subsistence</p>   | <p>Depending on an assessment of need leaving care personal advisers can purchase refreshments to enable a keywork session to be inclusive.</p> <p>As a general principle, keyworker session refreshments should be agreed in advance by a Leaving Care Team Manager and should not exceed £15.00 in total (up to £7.50 each) and occur relatively infrequently.</p> <p>Alternatively, leaving care personal advisers can purchase ingredients and prepare a meal with a young person as part of a keywork preparation for independence/life skills session.</p>   |  |
| <p>Exit Interview - Service Evaluation / Questionnaire</p> | <p>Young people will receive a £10.00 reward for taking part in a leaving care exit interview/questionnaire/evaluation. The evaluation will be undertaken between the ages of 21/25 when a young person is ceasing their involvement with the leaving care service.</p>  |  |
| <p>Emergency Payments</p>                                  | <p>Oxfordshire County Council and the District/Borough/City Councils all operate emergency help and assistance schemes that can assist with emergency utility payments and food, toiletries, and clothing to those most in need. Personal advisers will support young people to access these emergency resources in situations where the young person requires emergency food, clothing, or support with utility payments.</p> <p>Examples and Links:</p> <p><a href="https://www.billhelp.uk/oxfordshire-assistance-welfare-support-fund/">https://www.billhelp.uk/oxfordshire-assistance-welfare-support-fund/</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.billhelp.uk/oxfordshire-free-emergency-food-banks/">https://www.billhelp.uk/oxfordshire-free-emergency-food-banks/</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.billhelp.uk/south-oxfordshire-financial-assistance-from-support-fund/">https://www.billhelp.uk/south-oxfordshire-financial-assistance-from-support-fund/</a></p> |  |

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|--|--|--|
| <p>Emergency Payments<br/><i>Continued</i></p> | <p><a href="https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/covid-19/financial-support-available-for-residents-in-need-in-south-oxfordshire-and-the-vale-of-white-horse/">https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/covid-19/financial-support-available-for-residents-in-need-in-south-oxfordshire-and-the-vale-of-white-horse/</a></p> <p><a href="https://oxfordcitycharity.org.uk/grants/relief-in-need-grants/">https://oxfordcitycharity.org.uk/grants/relief-in-need-grants/</a></p> <p>Subject to an assessment of need, young people may be provided with additional support by the leaving care teams in exceptional situations and circumstances. In the majority of cases support will be provided via emergency food parcels and vouchers and a contribution to utility's and services.</p> |  |
| <p>Exceptional Needs Payment</p>               | <p>Where appropriate, and dependent on an assessment of need, Oxfordshire Children's Services may provide funds for exceptional needs as a one-off payment.</p> <p>This will require approval from a Leaving Care Team Manager.</p>  |  |

## Section 3

This section applies to Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant Children Aged 16 to 21/25 or until completion of an agreed programme of education or training being undertaken on the young person's 25<sup>th</sup> birthday

| <b>Setting Up Home Allowance</b>   |   |
|--|---|
|  | <b>Children Services will cover the initial costs of the following:</b>   |
| £159.00<br>Not Transferable  | For TV licence. (First licence paid for by Oxfordshire Children's Services and subsequent ones paid for by young person).   |
| Up to £50.00<br>Not Transferable   | Health and safety pack <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two smoke detectors, one carbon monoxide detector, door security chain, chub lock, fire blanket and first aid kit.</li> </ul> |
| Up to £25.00<br>Not Transferable   | Setting up home starter pack <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coffee, tea, washing-up liquid, light bulbs, laundry and cleaning equipment utility key/card top-up, etc.</li> </ul>    |
| Up to £100.00<br>Not Transferable  | Fitting of a gas/electric cooker by an approved fitter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided once.</li> </ul>   |
| Up to £100.00<br>Not Transferable  | Contents insurance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided once for the first year living independently.</li> </ul>   |
| Up to £150.00<br>Not Transferable  | Removal costs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided once* for a move to independent accommodation.</li> </ul>   |
| £2416.00   | Accommodation Items   |
| <b>Up To £3000.00</b>  | <b>Total Amount</b>   |
| <p>The level of Setting Up Home Allowance each young person receives will be based on the level of allowance set for the year they first started using it.</p> <p>As a general principle up to a maximum of £500.00 can be used <b>prior</b> to the young person's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday whilst they are living in semi-independent accommodation (furnished) and the remainder can be used after the age of 18 when they move to independent accommodation (unfurnished). Where specific items are purchased prior to the age of 18 these should be items that young people can take with them to independent accommodation.</p> <p>In situations where social workers for 16 &amp; 17 year olds are working with young people moving to semi-independent living and are planning on purchasing setting up home items they must liaise with personal advisers regarding the use of the</p> |   |

allowance. Authorisation for expenditure must be sought from the Team Manager or Head of Service (CWCF) and all expenditure fully recorded.

The Setting Up Home Allowance is available up to the age of 25 or, until the completion of an education or training programme extending beyond 25, where young people are attending further education/training or higher education courses on their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.

The Setting Up Home Allowance is provided to ensure that the accommodation the young person is living in is homely and furnished and should always be used to purchase household items. The Setting Up Home Allowance is based on an assessment of need, taking account of any items provided with the accommodation.

The entitlement to the Setting Up Home Allowance extends to the age of 25, or until the end of the agreed program of education/training being undertaken on the 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. The entitlement is to household items/furnishings not necessarily to a cash payment. The purpose of the Setting Up Home Allowance is to ensure that young people have the household items that they need to furnish their home rather than an entitlement to a cash amount.

Young people will have a choice of how the Setting Up Home Allowance is used; a) supported shop, b) items purchased by Children's Services that have been identified/chosen by the young person, c) where assessed as appropriate, young people will be provided with a cash grant to purchase items, this will be undertaken where the young person has been able to evidence financial capability and robust money management skills.

VAT may be reclaimed on all purchases, where items are VAT rated and where Children's Services has purchased the goods. Original receipts must be kept by Children's Services.

Where young people have No Recourse to Public Funds, a temporary asylum status, or are 'All Rights Exhausted', they are likely to be living in temporary and/or semi-independent accommodation and therefore will only need to use part of their Setting Up Home Allowance until they obtain permanent status as the accommodation provided will usually contain the majority of household items.

Where young people have had several moves and may have lost, misplaced, or had items damaged, additional resources/items may be made available subject to an assessment of need.

Where young people are living in unsettled or temporary accommodation, the Setting Up Home Allowance should be used to purchase essential items, with the majority of the Allowance being held back until more settled/permanent accommodation is available.

Young people are entitled to one set of removal costs, cooker fitting costs, insurance costs, health and safety equipment costs and one setting up home starter pack. \* Where a young person requires a second set of one-off costs, these will only be provided subject to an assessment of need and approval of a Leaving Care Team Manager and with approval of the Head of Service (Leaving Care).

Where young people have additional needs and are being supported by an Adult Service under the Care Act 2014 the Setting Up Home Allowance will continue to be available if it is required. Where a young person is placed into residential care and all items are provided through the placement the Setting Up Home Allowance will not be needed. Where young people move to supported living, an assessment of need will be undertaken, and the Setting Up Home Allowance will be provided if the accommodation requires additional furnishings.

The final Pathway Plan at age 21/25 should also set out a timescale and process for obtaining the final items. Where young people are being discharged from hospital or being released from custody immediately prior to, or immediately after their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday, the final pathway plan should set out when and how the Setting Up Home Allowance will be accessed and used, if the young person does not have a discharge or release date by their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday, the service and the provision of the Grant will cease, the use of the Setting Up Home Allowance should be completed by 25½.

£2416.00 for Setting Up Home Equipment (Accommodation Items):

This Allowance should be spent in stages; initially on semi-independent setting needs and subsequently, on independent accommodation needs. The Allowance will always be spent collaboratively between the social worker, leaving care personal adviser (or foster carer / staying put carer / residential keyworker / supported accommodation support worker) and young person. Original receipts should be retained by social workers/personal advisers for audit purposes, reclaiming VAT and in case defective items need to be returned.

\*See below for a suggested list of essential (not exhaustive). Young people may have acquired some items gifted to them or via savings etc., and therefore are able to spend more on individual items if in agreement with their Social Worker or Personal Adviser. Young People may also be able to put additional money towards items from their own financial resources.

### **Storage**

Only in exceptional situations and following an assessment of need should storage be agreed, in the first instance, the young person should be supported to identify their own storage solution, i.e., identifying a trusted, family member, friend or former foster carer where they can store items. Where Oxfordshire Children's Services does provide storage, this should be for a maximum of three months and should include an inventory of items and their condition and should be authenticated via a photographic record.

## Section 4

## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Categories of Care Leavers

#### Categories of Young People Eligible for Leaving Care Services and Support

##### **Eligible children: [paragraph 19(2)(b) of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989 and Regulation 40 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010]**

- An eligible child is a young person aged 16 or 17 who is looked after and has been looked after for at least 13 weeks after the age of 14. [Can become an eligible child at any point from their 16th to 18th birthday as long as they have completed 13 weeks] [must complete 24 hours looked after age 16/17]
- The 13 weeks can be a continuous period or a series of episodes.
- In calculating the 13 weeks no account is taken of pre-planned short breaks amounting to no more than 4 weeks and where a child returns to their parent, or someone with parental responsibility.
- Young people who are remanded into custody become looked after at the point of remand. This group may then become an eligible children or relevant children if they complete 13 weeks of being looked after on remand.

##### **Relevant children: [Section 23A(2) ]**

- A relevant child is a young person aged 16 or 17 who was an 'eligible' child' but is no longer looked after.
- Additional relevant children:
  - Detained (sentenced), or in hospital prior to 16th birthday, and
  - Looked after for at least 13 weeks after age 14 and looked after at point of being detained (sentenced) or entering hospital (and still in custody/detention/hospital).
- In calculating the 13 weeks no account is taken of pre-planned short breaks amounting to no more than 4 weeks and where a child returns to their parent, or someone with parental responsibility.
- A child who has lived with someone who has parental responsibility or a residence order for a continuous period of 6 months or more and has ceased to be looked after (whether that period commenced before or after they ceased to be looked after) is not deemed a Relevant child (but is deemed a Qualifying child).
  - If the above arrangement breaks down and the child ceases to live with the person concerned, the child becomes a relevant child.

**Former Relevant children (age 18 to 21, or, until the education or training programme being undertaken on their 21st birthday is completed): [Section 23C (1)]**

- A young person who was previously an 'Eligible' child or a 'Relevant' child

**Former Relevant children (age 21, and under 25) [Section 23CA (1)]**

- Young people who inform the local authority that they want to pursue education or training between the age of 21 and 25 and where previously a 'Former Relevant' child.

**Former Relevant children (age 21, and under 25) [Section 23CZB (1)]**

- Young people who inform the local authority that they want to continue or resume a leaving care service between the age of 21 and 25 and where previously a 'Former 'Relevant' child.

**Persons Qualifying for Advice and Assistance (aged 16 to 21, and under certain circumstances aged under 25) [Section 24]**

- Young people aged at least 16, and under 21/25, who were subject to a special guardianship order and were looked after before the making of that order.
- Young people who were previously subject to a private fostering arrangement
- Young people who successfully returned home for six months (aged 16/17) and were previously 'Eligible' and/or 'Relevant'.
- Young people who were looked after for less than 13 weeks between the age of 14 to 18 and were looked after for at least 24 hours aged 16 and 17.
- Young people aged 16, and under 21/25, who were looked after in a series of pre-planned short breaks.
- Young people aged 16 and under 21/25 who spent at least 3 months in a special school with residential provision (with an EHCP), between the ages of 16 and 18.

## Appendix B

### **Qualifying Children and Young People over 16**

Section 24 (advice and assistance) of the Children Act 1989 [as amended by the Planning Transitions to Adulthood for Care Leavers 2010 Guidance and the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010] covers 'Qualifying Children and Young People'.

Depending on an assessment of need, Oxfordshire Children's Services has a responsibility to provide practical and financial support and assistance to Qualifying Children and Young People over 16. Individual young people may be given practical support and financial assistance (Children Act 1989 (Section 24A (5)) and Section 24B) with priority being given to support relating to education, training and employment opportunities. Leaving care personal advisers should assist young people to maximise financial support available from employment, benefits and education allowances and opportunities.

Oxfordshire Children's Services has a duty to provide vacation accommodation, or the means to secure it, to any care leaver qualifying for advice and assistance, who is between the ages of 16 and 25, who is in higher education or in residential further education and who needs accommodation.

Depending on an assessment of need Qualifying Children and Young People may require and may be provided with the same level of service as Eligible, Relevant or Former Relevant young people.

See Volume 3 Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers Guidance – Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010 (revised 2015 & 2022). – Para 2.6 to 2.11 Page 15 & 16. Para 8.43 to 8.51 Page 84 & 85.

## Appendix C

### **Young People Who are Detained**

#### **Eligible and Relevant Children who are 'detained'**

##### ***The Care Leavers (England) Regulations Section 23A (3) paragraph (2) (3)***

- Children and young people who are detained and are subject to a Section 31 Care Order remain looked after on entering custody (on being remanded and being sentencing) and on reaching age 16 they become 'Eligible' care leavers.
- Young people who are Accommodated under Section 20, remain looked after when 'remanded' and cease to be looked after if they receive a custodial sentence.
- Young people who are remanded become looked after (Section 21) on being remanded and cease to be looked after on being sentenced.
- Young people who have been looked after for 13 weeks from the age of 14 (remand and non-remand) and receive a custodial sentence (or are still on remand) before their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday become 'Relevant' care leavers on reaching their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday.
  - Young Offender Institution (YOI).
  - Secure Training Centre (STC).
  - Secure Children's Home (SCH).

#### **Young Offender Detentions (16 & 17 Year Olds)**

Where a young person is 'detained' because of a 'remand' or 'sentence', the majority of their financial allowances will be suspended. Financial support for young people who are detained (remand/sentence) in Young Offenders Institutes should be governed by the rules of the particular establishment they are detained in. In general, young people are expected to undertake education or training and are provided with pocket money for engaging in these activities. Additionally, they will often be provided with clothing, or are able to bring clothing with them. As such, they will not be provided with any allowances while detained. In exceptional situations where education, training or work opportunities are not available and no pocket money or remuneration scheme exists, young people will be provided with a £10.00



per week pocket money allowance. This will be provided in-line with any recommendations of the particular establishment and should be set out in the young person's pathway plan. Where the establishment provides an allowance of less than £10.00 per week this can be topped up to £10.00 by Children's Services.

Additionally, and in exceptional circumstances, a clothing allowance commensurate with the leaving care clothing allowance of £25.00 per month may be provided.

Where appropriate, and dependent on an assessment of need, Birthday and Christmas/Festival Allowances will continue to be provided and depending on the rules of the institution, will be provided to the young person, or retained until their release.

On release, young people aged 16 & 17 may have access to the £200.00 initial clothing allowance subject to and assessment of need.

### **Hospital Detentions (16 & 17 Year Olds)**

Young people who are detained in an NHS provision or contracted out NHS provision will be provided with an allowance of £10.00 per week and the standard leaving care clothing allowance of £25.00 per month, in addition young people should be supported to claim ESA/UC.

The allowances are based on an assessment of need and risk, how these are provided should be set out in the individual placement plan and pathway plan. Where benefits can be claimed (ESA/UC) the Leaving Care Personal Allowances (£10.00 pocket money /£25.00 clothing allowance will be added to the young person's Junior ISA) once benefits are in payment (those detained in hospital). See page 15. In addition, those detailed in hospitals will be provided with the Birthday and Christmas/Festival Allowances.

On discharge, young people aged 16 & 17 may have access to the £200.00 initial clothing allowance subject to and assessment of need.

### **Former Relevant Children who are 'detained'** ***The Care Leavers (England) Regulations Section 23C (1)***

#### **Former Relevant Children - Detentions (18 to 21/25)**

Where a young person is 'detained' because of a 'remand' or 'sentence', the majority of their financial allowances will be suspended. Financial support for young people who are detained (remand/sentence) in Young Offenders Institutes or Prison is governed by the rules of the particular establishment they are detained in. In general, young people are expected to undertake education or training and are provided with pocket money for engaging in these activities. Additionally, they will often be provided with clothing, or are able to bring clothing with them. As such, they will not be provided with allowances while detained. In exceptional situations where education, training or work opportunities are not available and no pocket money or remuneration scheme exists, young people will be provided with a £10.00 per week pocket money allowance. This will be provided in-line with any recommendations of the specific establishment and should be set out in the young person's pathway plan. Personal Advisers should liaise with the young person's 'Offender Manager' regarding the use of any allowances and how they will be provided. Young people

will also have access to a one-off £40.00 engagement in education/training (positive activity) grant during their period of detention (one per detention period).

Where appropriate, and dependent on an assessment of need, Birthday and Christmas/Festival allowances will continue to be paid and depending on the rules of the institution, will be given to the young person, or retained until their release. On release young people will have access to their 'Setting Up Home Allowance' and if they are claiming Universal Credit, they can apply for a Universal Credit Advance via ADM – A2048. Young people who are being released from custody can submit a claim for Universal Credit 28 days in advance of their release date.

Where young people are being discharged from hospital or being released from custody immediately prior to, or immediately after their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday, the final pathway plan should set out when and how the Setting Up Home Allowance will be accessed and used, if the young person does not have a discharge or release date by their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday, the service and the provision of the Grant will cease, the use of the Setting Up Home Allowance should be completed by 25½.

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

## Appendix D

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

#### **Principles:**

- Wherever possible, parents should be financially responsible for their own children and should not be funded by Oxfordshire Children's Services to support their own children.
- Where financial allowances are provided to parents, these should not create inequalities with other siblings and children within the family/household who have not been looked after.
- Subject to an assessment of need, a one-off payment, or the purchase of an item will be considered where it is deemed it would assist with a positive transition home.
- The rules on a parent's eligibility for benefits for a child placed at home or returning home after the age of 16 is complex and is dependent on whether they are eligible, relevant or qualifying, being resident with the parent and whether the child is undertaking education or training.

## Section 1

### Placement with Parents – Children Reaching the Age of 16 Subject to a Care Order or Interim Care Order

The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 (revised 2015 & 2021) and associated Guidance sets out that the Responsible Local Authority is required to assess and meeting the needs, including the financial needs of an ‘Eligible’ (and ‘Relevant’) child.

#### **Children Under 16:**

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

The rules of benefit entitlement where children return to parents after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday are complex and entitlement should be checked with the DWP and HMRC. Transitional payment example (the amounts set out below are based on Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit indicative amounts (Table One) and Universal Credit (Table Two) rates:

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

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

**Table One**

| Parent/s Eligible For: | First Child/Oldest Child | Second Child           |
|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Child Tax Credits      | £62.21 per week          | £62.21 per week        |
| Child Benefit          | £24.00 per week          | £15.90 per week        |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>£86.21 per week</b>   | <b>£78.11 per week</b> |

**Table Two**

| Parent/s Eligible For: | First Child/Oldest Child                                 | First/Second Child     |
|------------------------|--|------------------------|
| Universal Credit       | £72.69 (born before 6 <sup>th</sup> April 2017) per week | £62.21 per week        |
| Child Benefit          | £24.00 per week  | £15.90 per week        |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>£96.69 per week</b>                                   | <b>£78.11 per week</b> |

- Where a child was placed with a parent/s prior to their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday a review of the financial support for the child and parent/s must take place when the child becomes an '**Eligible**' child. The review must be undertaken within the framework of the Regulation 42 - Assessment of Need (Pathway Part One).
- If the child/young person is engaged in education or training the child benefit and tax credits/Universal Credit will continue once the child reaches the age of 16.

Most 'Eligible' children will be living in foster care, residential care or, in a home deemed 'Other Arrangements'. The financial support provided to the child will be set out in the fostering financial policy, residential financial policy and the leaving care financial policy.

1. In situations where a child aged 16 or 17 is placed with a parent or returns home to live with a parent and is not engaged in any education or training, the leaving care financial policy provides guidance on the provision of any allowances (standard allowances).
2. In situations where a child aged 16 or 17 is placed with a parent or returns home to live with a parent and is engaged in education or training, the leaving financial policy provides guidance on the provision of any allowances, if the young person remains an 'Eligible' Care Leaver (due to the child being on a care order), the parent is likely to be become entitled to claim benefits after, a) the care order is revoked, and b) the young person has been living with the parent for 6 months (parent is unlikely to qualify for benefits for the first 6 months of the return home), thereafter the parent is likely to be able to apply for child benefit and tax credits/Universal Credit. If the young person (section 20) returns home and becomes a 'Relevant' Care Leaver, the parent is unlikely to be able to apply for benefits until the young person has been at home for 6 months and become a 'Qualifying' care Leaver (and is engaged in education/training).
3. In situations where a child aged 16 or 17 is placed at home or returns home and is not engaged in education or training a parent will not be eligible to claim child benefit or benefits. Therefore, the local authority Oxfordshire Children's Services will need to provide an allowance.

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

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

Young people placed with parents who are not engaged in education or training should therefore be provided with the standard Care Leavers Personal Allowance of £67.20 per week (2023-2024).

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

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

When developing a Care/Pathway Plan for a young person placed with parent/s or living with a parent/s consideration should be given to whether the young person should provide a percentage of their Care Leavers Personal Allowance to their parent/s as a contribution to living costs. The level of the contribution should be set out in the young person's Care/Pathway Plan. For example, it may be appropriate that the young person retain an amount equivalent to pocket money and a clothing allowance element i.e., £15.75 (pocket money £10.00 and clothing allowance £5.75) and provide a contribution to the parent of £51.45 per week (2023-2024) – Total £67.20.

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

As noted above, there is an obligation on the local authority to provide financial assistance to children looked after and care leavers would normally fall on parents, and/or on the welfare benefit system. Being an Eligible or Relevant child (regardless of them being placed at home) generally disqualifies parents from welfare benefits/tax credits/universal credit (or where they have recently returned – within the last 6 months).

The majority of Eligible or Relevant children (living outside of the parental home) are disqualified from welfare benefits/tax credits/universal credit, with the exception of sick and disabled children and children who are also lone parents.

Alternatively and where assessed as appropriate, and in circumstances where a child looked after or care leaver aged 16 or 17 is placed/living with a parent who is in receipt of a welfare benefit/tax credit/universal credit, the difference between the young person's Care Leavers Personal Allowance and the level of the welfare benefit/tax credits/universal credit that the parent would be entitled to in respect of the returned child, (if they were not an Eligible or Relevant child) can be provided directly to the parent/s.

### **Care Order Revocations and Ceasing Financial Allowances**

Where an 'Eligible' child has lived with a person with parental responsibility for at least 6 months and they cease to be cared for (looked after), due to the revocation of the Care Order, or Interim Care Order they become a 'Qualifying' child (a Qualifying child is a 16 to 21/25 year old subject to Section 24 of the Children Act 1989). The 6 month period living with parents that is required to be deemed a Qualifying child, can include time both prior to, and after the revocation of the Care Order.

Welfare benefit legislation relating to 'Qualifying' children sets out that both parents and children are entitled to welfare benefits/tax credits/universal credit (subject to meeting any benefit conditions).

'Qualifying' child status does not have any impact on either the child, or parents benefit or tax credit (Universal Credit) entitlements. Once a child is deemed a 'Qualifying' child and following a financial re-assessment of their financial needs, the majority, if not all, of the leaving care financial support being provided should cease. The primary responsibility for meeting a 'Qualifying' child's financial needs rests with the parent/s. The detailed financial and practical arrangements to support the child and parent should be set out in the Care/Pathway Plan and Placement Plan. The level of the leaving care financial support should be based on an assessment of need and set out in the Care/Pathway Plan.

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

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

The principles and financial approach set out above in section 1, i.e., the Care Leavers Personal Allowance being provided to the young person and an assessment of the need for any additional allowances being undertaken to consider the types and level of financial support to be provided should be followed. The Care/Pathway Plan should be used to evidence and explain the level of, and the types of financial support to be provided.

## **Section 2**

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

In circumstances where it is deemed appropriate for a child to return to a parent/s at the age of 16 or 17, following an assessment of suitability, the evaluation of financial support to the child and/or parent should be completed prior to the child returning to the parent/s. On the child returning to the parent/s the child becomes a 'Relevant' child.

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

In circumstances where the 'Relevant' child is living with a parent/s as part of planned return to a parent/s, both the assessment of, and financial support should focus on assisting the transition to parental financial support. The principles set out above in section 1 should be used to assess the type and level of financial support. The Pathway Plan should be used to evidence and explain the level of, and the types of financial support to be provided.

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

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

## **Section 3**

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

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

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

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

## **Section 4**

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

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

Financial support should only be provided to the child in line with the Leaving Care Finance Policy. No payment or any percentage of the Care Leavers Personal Allowance should be made to the parents until it is deemed appropriate for the 'Relevant' child to remain living with the parent/s.

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

An assessment should also be undertaken regarding withholding financial support (if the young person is staying with parents against the wishes of Oxfordshire Children's Services) in case the withholding of financial support may put the young person at risk of exploitation.

## **Summary**

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

- where a child/young person is Eligible or Relevant it is unlikely that parents will qualify for child benefit/child tax credits/universal credit.
- Once the child/young person becomes Qualifying parents will qualify for child benefit/child tax credits/universal credit.
- An assessment should be undertaken as to whether financial support is required based on the allowances provided within the leaving care finance policy provide.



Eligibility Chart:

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | Child – Placed with P – Section 31 prior to the age of 16                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent able to claim child benefit and tax credits/universal credit when child placed.</li> </ul>  |
| 2 | Child – Placed with P – Section 31 prior to the age of 16, reaching age 16           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent able to claim child benefit and tax credits/universal credit when child placed, these will continue into school year 12/13 if the child is undertaking education or training.</li> <li>• If the child is not undertaking education or training – parent is not eligible to claim.</li> </ul>  |
| 3 | Child – Placed with P – Section 31 after the age of 16.                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent unlikely to be able to claim child benefit and tax credits/universal credit.</li> </ul>   |
| 4 | Child – Placed with P – Section 31 – care order revoked when the child is aged 16/17 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent unlikely to be able to claim child benefit and tax credits/universal credit even if the child is undertaking education or training for 6 months after the order is revoked (can claim on becoming Qualifying).</li> <li>• If the child is not undertaking education or training – parent is not eligible to claim.</li> </ul>   |
| 5 | Child – returning to live with a parent, person with PR (section 20 ending)          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent unlikely to be able to claim child benefit and tax credits/universal credit even if the child is undertaking education or training for 6 months after the return.</li> <li>• If the child is undertaking education or training – parent is eligible to claim benefits after the child has been at home for 6 months.</li> <li>• If the child is not undertaking education or training – parent is not eligible to claim.</li> </ul> |

## Appendix E

### **Criminal Injuries Compensation Award Payments**

The rules on Criminal Injuries Compensation Award (C.I.C.A.) payments allow a young person a 52 week 'grace period' regarding eligibility for means tested benefits after receipt of the award. The following guidance should still be followed.

Housing Benefit, Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance and Universal Credit legislation sets out that a C.I.C.A. payment is disregarded in terms of calculating benefit entitlement for the first 52 weeks after receipt of the award as it is deemed a personal injury payment.

Young people who receive a C.I.C.A. payment should be assisted to seek independent financial advice regarding establishing a Discretionary Trust Fund. Additionally, young people should be made aware of the implications of the C.I.C.A. payment for any benefit claim they may make or have after the 52 week disregard period. Young people should visit the Citizen's Advice Bureau and choose an independent solicitor and financial adviser to explore opportunities to use their award in a positive manner.

Generally, young people will receive their C.I.C.A. payment on their eighteenth birthday. If a young person establishes a 'Discretionary Trust Fund' prior to, or within 52 weeks of receiving their payment they continue to be eligible for benefits. Establishing a 'Discretionary Trust Fund' results in their award payment being 'tied up' until they reach the age of 21 or older. Children's Services will provide financial support to assist young people to establish a Discretionary Trust Fund where the CICA Award is over £6000.00. In addition, Children's Services will nominate two Trustees to help manage the Discretionary Trust Fund (Children's Services will provide an indemnity insurance policy for the two Trustees).

If a C.I.C.A. award has not been placed in a Trust Fund or used after 52 weeks the following will apply; if the award was less than £6000.00 it will not affect a claim for benefit. If the award is between £6000.00 and £16,000.00, it will result in a reduced benefit payment and an award of over £16,000.00 will disqualify a young person from benefit. Strict benefit rules apply in regard to spending the award after the 52-week disregard period, consideration should be given to the DWP rules on the inappropriate disposal of 'capital'. It is important that young people are given independent advice regarding C.I.C.A. payments and that social workers/personal advisers are not responsible for choosing who gives advice.

"Where a young person has been awarded a sum in compensation for a criminal injury, Children, Schools and Families [*Children's Services*] is required to disregard that capital entirely." See page 62 para 4 - Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 Guidance.

## Appendix F

### **Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)**

#### **Eligible and Relevant Children (UASC)**

##### **Key Guidance**

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

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

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) are covered by the Children Act 1989 and the provisions of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Guidance and Regulations 2010 [16 & 17 year olds] (revised 2015 & 2021) and the Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers Guidance 2010 and the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010 (revised 2015 & 2022) [16 to 21/25 year olds] in exactly the same way as other children in this country.

However, they will also have an immigration status:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Planning may be based on:

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

## **Failed Asylum Seekers aged 18 to 21/25**

### **Former Relevant Children**

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

Where young people have:

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

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

Oxfordshire Children's Services will provide a Higher Education Grant to unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people only if all of the following circumstances are met:

- a) they have been offered a higher education place;
- b) Student Finance England have award them a student loan;
- c) they are classified as a home student.

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

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

Where asylum seeking young people:

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

they will not be eligible for higher education funding.

Oxfordshire Children's Services will fund one ESOL course (Age 16 to 21/25) and will only consider funding a second course under exceptional circumstances.

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

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

Where young people lose access to welfare benefits and are deemed 'end of line cases' or 'all appeal rights exhausted' cases, Oxfordshire Children's Services will provide an allowance commensurate with benefits following the completion of a Human Rights Assessment. Support will consist of accommodation and £67.20 as the accommodation will include the provision of utilities and services.

This allowance can continue to be paid until the removal date or the young person's 21<sup>st</sup>/25<sup>th</sup> birthday, whichever comes first [in principle funding for education or training courses should cease as soon as a young person receives a NRPF or ARE status]. In addition, the provision of an allowance and accommodation is dependent on the young person remaining in contact with their personal adviser and actively engaging in the pathway planning process.

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

## **Pathway Planning Guidance**

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

In circumstances where a child becomes looked after and is seeking asylum after the age of 16, the Leaving Care Assessment of Need (Pathway Needs Assessment) should be completed after the second CWCF Review.

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

### **Appealing an Initial Asylum Decision**

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

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

### **Summary**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Schedule 3 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002**

It is important that Personal Advisers and others working with the young people understand that their immigration status may affect their eligibility to leaving care support after they turn 18, in part because of the provisions of Schedule 3 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 (and Immigration Act 2016 if and when the guidance is applied – this may be superseded by the Nationality and Borders Act 2022).

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

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

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

For example, if an adult is unlawfully present in the UK, i.e., they have no form of leave to be in the UK and are not an asylum seeker (as they are failed), a local authority is prohibited from providing them with support under the leaving care provisions (and

other statutes) unless this is necessary in order to avoid a breach of their human rights, whether in their home country or in the UK.

**Note:**

The section above will be updated when the Immigration Act 2016 Guidance has been issued and/or the Nationality and Borders Bill 2022 and the full timescales for implement are issued.

**Access to Public Funds and Welfare Benefits**

Young people must apply to extend their leave to remain at least two months before their immigration leave status expires. If this task is completed by a young person's eighteenth birthday and they have proof that the Home Office has received their application, the young person is then eligible to apply for benefits. Personal Advisers should obtain a letter from the young person's solicitor that includes details of the young person's immigration status; the date of the application to extend the leave to remain was submitted. The solicitor submits the renewal/extension by recorded post. The recorded post item will have a tracking number that can be used to verify that the Home Office received the application. The letter from the solicitor and a printout of the Post Office tracking statement should be submitted with the young person's benefit claim. Given the number of asylum applications over the last few years, many young people have not received an initial decision by their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**Failed Asylum Seekers, No Recourse to Public Funds, All Rights Exhausted and Human Rights Assessments (Oxfordshire Approach)**

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

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

This section will be updated when the guidance associated with the Immigration Act 2016 is issued/applied. It is likely the Nationality and Borders Bill 2022 will supersede and replace the Immigration Act 2016.



## Appendix G



### **Consent to Share / Disclose Information under the Data Protection Act 2018 & GDPR.**

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Name of Student:    |  |
| Name of University: |  |
| Student ID Number:  |  |
| Title of Course:    |  |

**Please read the following statement carefully:**

I, the above-named Student, consent to Oxfordshire Children's Services, Leaving Care Team sharing information and liaising with the above-named University in order to co-ordinate and maximise the support that I receive. I agree to the above-named university releasing and sharing information with my leaving care personal adviser regarding the following areas:

- My general participation at University
- My attendance
- My grades (by term or semester)
- Any other information that is deemed necessary

*Obtaining this information will enable Oxfordshire County Council to ensure you have the right level of support and financial assistance for the duration of your degree course.*

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| Date From: | <i>The Information Sharing Agreement should have a start and end date.</i> |
| Date To:   | <i>The Information Sharing Agreement should have a start and end date.</i> |
| Name:      |  |
| Signed:    |  |
| Date:      |  |

## Appendix H

Higher Education Checklist for Personal Advisers - Students due to Commence University:

Checklist to be used to confirm all task have been checked and confirmed in preparation for a young person starting a higher education course in September.

| Topic Area     | Action Required   | Complete |
|----------------|---|----------|
| Course / Offer | Confirm the conditions of their UCAS offer, and that the young person meets the condition that means they are not dependent on results due over the summer (e.g., GCSE maths/english or equivalent) |          |
|                | Does the young person have a plan to collect any results (e.g., A2) and access appropriate support (school/college/Virtual School) if they are not as expected                                      |          |
|                | Is the young person expected to buy any equipment/books before starting their course?   |          |
|                | Does the young person have an appropriate computer, or have arrangements been made to purchase one  |          |

|                   |  |  |
|-------------------|--|--|
| Funding / Finance | Has the young person received a copy of the higher education support and funding approach  |  |
|                   | Have they applied for the appropriate financial support from Student Finance England (including any additional support regarding disabilities or parental/caring responsibilities)   |  |
|                   | Has the young person updated their Student Finance England online account to reflect any changes of circumstances (e.g., course/university changes, changes of address, student bank account details).   |  |
|                   | Has the young person investigated (and where appropriate applied for) additional financial support available from the higher education institution (Fair Access Offer)   |  |
|                   | Has the young person researched and applied for a student bank account (and overdraft facility – this is not automatic)  |  |
|                   | Have plans been made to inform appropriate benefit agencies of the change of circumstances in becoming a full-time higher education student (does the young person fit into one of the groups who may remain entitled to benefits whilst attending university) |  |

|               |  |  |
|---------------|--|--|
| Accommodation | Has appropriate accommodation been applied for/secured   |  |
|               | If appropriate, has the accommodation provider been advised of care-leaver status (regarding: 52 week tenancy options/deposit waivers) |  |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | If a deposit is required in advance (i.e., the provider is not willing to wait until student finance received), and this has been lent to the young person, is there a written agreement in place for repayment with timescales |  |
|  | Have arrangements been made for the personal adviser to visit the accommodation within the first term   |  |
|  | Have arrangements been made to give notice on existing accommodation  |  |
|  | Has consideration been given to any items that the young person may require as part of a Setting Up Home Allowance  |  |
|  | Have the arrangements for moving into the university accommodation been discussed and agreed  |  |
|  | Will the young person need support with transport costs whilst at university  |  |

|         |   |  |
|---------|---|--|
| Support | Have the relevant named contacts at the higher education institution been identified and contacted (specific care-leaver contact, student welfare services, finance, accommodation, tutor, other) |  |
|         | Has a consent to share information (with the above contacts) agreement been discussed with, and, if appropriate/required, signed by the young person  |  |
|         | Has the local authority leaving care team which covers the university area been informed of the young person moving into the area (what support will they be able to access)                      |  |

|        |  |  |
|--------|--|--|
| Health | Has the young person been reminded of the necessity of registering with a GP/dentist/optician in their new university location       |  |
|        | If the young person has any specific health needs, has contact been made with the relevant university or local area support networks |  |
|        | Does the young person know how to obtain a HC1 form for support with health care costs   |  |

|               |  |  |
|---------------|--|--|
| Ongoing Tasks | Have you had a discussion, and reached agreement about ongoing contact and visits and identifying a link contact at the university   |  |
|               | Are you aware of term dates required to calculate additional vacation accommodation payments   |  |
|               | Have you set reminders to pay the local authority bursary payments at the end of each term   |  |
|               | Have you discussed opportunities for your young person to gain relevant work experience during their vacations – including via the Employability Scheme if they are returning to Oxfordshire |  |

## Appendix I

### **National Insurance Numbers**

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

Children who are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance will have their National Insurance Number issued linked to their DLA claim.

Where a young person does not have a National Insurance Number by the age of 17, social workers/personal advisers should contact the Income Maximisation Team who will liaise with the Department for Work and Pensions to try to obtain a Number in advance of the young person's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

For detailed guidance see:

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/manuals/nimmanual/NIM39310.htm>

And [Get a National Insurance number for a looked after child - GOV.UK](http://www.gov.uk)  
([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

## Appendix J

### Standard Benefit Claim Letter 2023 - 2024



CLIENT NAME:  
(Tenant)

D.O.B:

N.I. NUMBER:

CURRENT ADDRESS:

TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION AND TENANCY: (Licence Agreement/Assured Shorthold)

PLACEMENT TYPE

NAME OF LANDLORD  
ADDRESS OF LANDLORD

Dear Sir/Madam,

This letter is provided to verify the identity of the above-named young person and to confirm and clarify **(his/her/them)** circumstances in support of their welfare benefit claim.

The above-named young person was previously placed in **(private accommodation /semi-independent accommodation/foster care/residential provision)** by Oxfordshire Children's Services at the above address. As the young person has now reached the age of eighteen and **(he/she/them)** is deemed 'independent in **(his/her/them)** own right' and is liable for accommodation costs of **(£00.00 per week)**, excluding utility and support charges **(he/she/them)** is submitting a claim for **(set out benefits being claimed)**. The information provided below sets out **(his/her/their)** legal status and financial circumstances.

I can confirm that **(Add Full Name)** was previously an 'Eligible' child, or an 'Eligible' and/or 'Relevant' child and became a 'Former Relevant' child on **(Add Date)** as defined by the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations and Guidance 2010 (Revised 2015 & 2021) and Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010 (Revised 2015 & 2022).

A. I can also confirm that **(Add Full Name)** was previously 'Looked After' by Oxfordshire Children's Services and was 'Accommodated' under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989.

B. I can also confirm that **(Add Full Name)** was previously 'Looked After' by Oxfordshire Children's Services and was subject to a Section 31 Care Order under the terms of the Children Act 1989.

**(Add Full Name)** ceased to be 'Looked After' on **(Add Date- 18<sup>th</sup> birthday or actual date if earlier)** and will continue to receive practical support and, in specific circumstances, financial help from Oxfordshire Children's Services under Section 24 of the Children Act 1989 or Section 23C of the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010 (Revised 2015 & 2022).

Section 23C and Section 24 payments must be declared when claiming benefits /Universal Credit but are not counted as income for any welfare benefit/Universal Credit purposes.

Whilst **(Add Full Name)** is establishing **(his/her/their)** welfare benefit/Universal Credit claim **(he/she/them)** will be provided with a leaving care personal allowance of £67.20 under these powers for 5 weeks.

1. As **(Add Full Name)** has now become a 'Former Relevant' child and ceased to be 'Looked After', I believe **(he/she/them)** will be entitled to claim Universal Credit at the rate of £292.11 (2023-2024) per month (if single without dependent children and not having limited capacity for work or work-related activity) and the relevant Housing Costs element. **(He/she/them)** will also be eligible to apply for Council Tax Support from the relevant local authority.
2. As **(Add Full Name)** has now become a 'Former Relevant' child, has ceased to be 'Looked After' and is engaged on a traineeship at the rate of **(ADD £ per week)**, I believe **(he/she/them)** will be entitled to claim Universal Credit at the rate of £292.11 (2023-2024) per month (if single without dependent children and not having limited capacity for work or work-related activity) and the relevant Housing Costs element, minus any income received from his training allowance, apart from the payment of travel and childcare expenses. **(He/she/them)** will also be eligible to apply for Council Tax Support from the relevant local authority.
3. As **(Add Full Name)** has now become a 'Former Relevant' child, has ceased to be 'Looked After', is without parental support and is entitled to claim whilst receiving non-advanced education, I believe **(he/she/them)** should receive Universal Credit at the rate of £292.11 (2023-2024) per month (if single without dependent children and not having limited capacity for work or work-related activity) and the relevant Housing Costs element. He/she/them will also be eligible to apply for Council Tax Support from the relevant local authority.
4. As **(Add Full Name)** has now become a 'Former Relevant' child, has ceased to be 'Looked After', and has been given a 'Fit Note' by **(his/her/their)** Doctor, I believe **(he/she/them)** will be entitled to claim Universal Credit at the rate of £292.11 (2023-2024) per month (if single without dependent children) and the relevant Housing Costs element. **(He/She/them)** should also be assessed for Limited Capacity for Work and Limited Capacity for Work-Related Activity.

**(He/she/they)** will also be eligible to apply for Council Tax Support from the relevant local authority.

5. As **(Add Full Name)** has now become a 'Former Relevant' child, has ceased to be 'Looked After' and is earning a low income, I believe **(he/she/they)** will be entitled to claim Universal Credit at the rate of £292.11 (2023-2024) per month (if single without dependent children and not having limited capacity for work or work-related activity) and the relevant Housing Costs element. **(He/she/they)** will also be eligible to apply for Council Tax Support from the relevant local authority. Please find attached relevant wage slips/prove of income.

As **(Add Full Name)** was 'Looked After' on/or after **(his/her/they)** 16<sup>th</sup> birthday **(he/she/they)** and is under 25 years of age, **(he/she/they)** is currently exempt from the shared accommodation rate of local housing allowance, and therefore should receive the one-bedroom rate as **(his/her/they)** housing cost element.

As **(Add Full Name)** is a care leaver and is also within 28 days of **(his/her/they)** eighteenth birthday, I understand they can commence and submit a claim for Universal Credit as set out in ADM – A-2048.

- A As **(Add Full Name)** was previously 'Looked After' and remains vulnerable, I would request that the 'Housing Costs' element of Universal Credit is paid under a 'Tier 1 Vulnerability - Alternative Payment Arrangement' directly to Children's Service as an agent of the landlord.
- B As **(Add Full Name)** was previously 'Looked After' and remains vulnerable, I would request that the 'Housing Costs' element of Universal Credit is paid under a 'Tier 1 Vulnerability - Alternative Payment Arrangement' directly to their landlord.

**(Add specific information)**

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

**Approved Signatures**

**Head of Service**

**Service Manager**

**Team Manager**

**Assistant Team Manager**

**\* Please complete, or delete, either section A or B, the subsequent three bullet points and complete the bold text sections and the relevant sections 1 to 6. All other sections must be completed.**

Information about disregarding Social Services payments to care leavers.

**Welfare Benefits and Tax Credits Handbook; Child Poverty Action Group:  
2018/19 edition**

**Chapter 7 Universal Credit – What Counts as Income  
Page 122**

**Payments by Social Services**

Universal Credit operates differently to other means-tested benefits, where all income is counted unless specifically disregarded. Under universal credit, only income that is specifically mentioned in the regulations counts as income. There is no mention of payments under the Children Act, and therefore any payments made under that legislation will be disregarded as income.



## Appendix K Sliding Scale/Earnings Threshold

|   |   |                                 |        |                 |        |                          |        |              |         |                           |         |  |         |                                 |                 |                          |        |              |         |                           |         |  |         |
|---|---|---------------------------------|--------|-----------------|--------|--------------------------|--------|--------------|---------|---------------------------|---------|--|---------|---------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|--------|--------------|---------|---------------------------|---------|--|---------|
| <p>Care Leavers Personal Allowance -</p> <p>Reductions and Adjustments Where Young People are Earning</p> | <p>Earnings and Income Reductions/Adjustments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When a young person has a weekly net income of £130.00 or more per week, his/her personal allowance will be reduced by 50%.</li> <li>• When a young person has a weekly net income of £150.00 or more per week, his/her personal allowance will cease.</li> </ul> <p>Reductions are undertaken from the principle of assisting with the development of money management and budgeting skills. As such, any reduction will be saved for the young person and added to their Junior ISA/Savings or Setting Up Home Allowance.</p> <p>Leaving Care Personal Allowance, Wages &amp; Earnings, Traineeship Allowances, Apprenticeship Allowances and the 16 - 19 Bursary count as income.</p> <p>Young people should be issued with a Reductions/Adjustments Notice by their social worker or personal adviser setting out the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The level of reduction/adjustment (of their allowance/s);</li> <li>2. When the reduction/adjustment will commence;</li> <li>3. What the young person can do if their circumstances change;</li> <li>4. What the young person can do if they do not agree with the assessed reduction.</li> </ol> <p>The Reduction/Adjustment Notice should be issued in writing and signed by the young person.</p> <p><u>Reduction/Adjustment equation:</u></p> <p>Total income minus fares, work costs and the cost of lunches. See examples below</p> <p>Example 1 – No reduction/adjustment required</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Leaving Care Personal Allowance</td> <td style="text-align: right; padding: 2px;">£67.20</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">16 – 19 Bursary</td> <td style="text-align: right; padding: 2px;">£40.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Wages from part time job</td> <td style="text-align: right; padding: 2px;">£28.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Total Income</td> <td style="text-align: right; padding: 2px;">£135.20</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">minus costs (lunches X 2)</td> <td style="text-align: right; padding: 2px;">£10.00-</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right; padding: 2px;">£125.20</td> </tr> </table> <p>Example 2</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Leaving Care Personal Allowance</td> <td style="text-align: right; padding: 2px;">£67.20 (£33.60)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Wages from part time job</td> <td style="text-align: right; padding: 2px;">£93.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Total Income</td> <td style="text-align: right; padding: 2px;">£160.20</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Minus costs (lunches X 4)</td> <td style="text-align: right; padding: 2px;">£20.00-</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right; padding: 2px;">£140.20</td> </tr> </table> <p>Leaving Care Personal Allowance reduced by 50%.</p> | Leaving Care Personal Allowance | £67.20 | 16 – 19 Bursary | £40.00 | Wages from part time job | £28.00 | Total Income | £135.20 | minus costs (lunches X 2) | £10.00- |  | £125.20 | Leaving Care Personal Allowance | £67.20 (£33.60) | Wages from part time job | £93.00 | Total Income | £160.20 | Minus costs (lunches X 4) | £20.00- |  | £140.20 |
| Leaving Care Personal Allowance   | £67.20  |                                 |        |                 |        |                          |        |              |         |                           |         |  |         |                                 |                 |                          |        |              |         |                           |         |  |         |
| 16 – 19 Bursary   | £40.00  |                                 |        |                 |        |                          |        |              |         |                           |         |  |         |                                 |                 |                          |        |              |         |                           |         |  |         |
| Wages from part time job  | £28.00  |                                 |        |                 |        |                          |        |              |         |                           |         |  |         |                                 |                 |                          |        |              |         |                           |         |  |         |
| Total Income  | £135.20   |                                 |        |                 |        |                          |        |              |         |                           |         |  |         |                                 |                 |                          |        |              |         |                           |         |  |         |
| minus costs (lunches X 2)   | £10.00-   |                                 |        |                 |        |                          |        |              |         |                           |         |  |         |                                 |                 |                          |        |              |         |                           |         |  |         |
|   | £125.20   |                                 |        |                 |        |                          |        |              |         |                           |         |  |         |                                 |                 |                          |        |              |         |                           |         |  |         |
| Leaving Care Personal Allowance   | £67.20 (£33.60)   |                                 |        |                 |        |                          |        |              |         |                           |         |  |         |                                 |                 |                          |        |              |         |                           |         |  |         |
| Wages from part time job  | £93.00  |                                 |        |                 |        |                          |        |              |         |                           |         |  |         |                                 |                 |                          |        |              |         |                           |         |  |         |
| Total Income  | £160.20   |                                 |        |                 |        |                          |        |              |         |                           |         |  |         |                                 |                 |                          |        |              |         |                           |         |  |         |
| Minus costs (lunches X 4)   | £20.00-   |                                 |        |                 |        |                          |        |              |         |                           |         |  |         |                                 |                 |                          |        |              |         |                           |         |  |         |
|   | £140.20   |                                 |        |                 |        |                          |        |              |         |                           |         |  |         |                                 |                 |                          |        |              |         |                           |         |  |         |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>Reductions<br/>Where Young<br/>People are<br/>Earning<br/><i>Continued</i></p> | <p>LCPA reduced by 50% - net income becomes = £126.60.</p> <p>In order to monitor payments/reductions/adjustments and other education, training and employment related payments, social workers and personal advisers will need to maintain close liaison with a young person's education, training and employment provider.</p> <p>Additionally, this liaison will ensure a young person receives practical assistance, if, and when required. To facilitate this process young people must sign the 'Agreement to Share Information Form' so that social workers/personal advisers can liaise with the above.</p> <p>To assist a young person with making a successful transition to employment and managing their wages a reduction will not be applied until they have completed six weeks of employment irrespective of income.</p> <p>A young person will need to provide proof of income in order that his/her social worker/personal adviser can calculate any reductions. If proof is not forthcoming it will be assumed that earnings are exceeding £130.00 / £150.00 net per week. In these circumstances the allowance of £67.20 will cease on a temporary basis until proof of income is provided.</p> <p>In exceptional circumstances and subject to an assessment of need, food parcels/vouchers can be provided where the young person is working and is unable to provide proof of income, support should be provided to the young person to help them to obtain evidence of income. Additionally, all other allowances can be suspended.</p> |
|---|--|

## Appendix K

### Financial Assessment Form and Leaving Care Personal Allowance Reduction Notice

Income:

Calculation Date:

| Item                            | Amount (£) |
|---------------------------------|------------|
| Leaving Care Personal Allowance |            |
| 16-19 Bursary                   |            |
| Traineeship Allowance           |            |
| Apprenticeship Allowance        |            |
| Earnings (Part and Full Time)   |            |
| Other                           |            |
| Total Income (Subtotal 1)       |            |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Less fares related to work/training/study |  |
| Total Costs (Subtotal 2)                  |  |

Deduct Subtotal 2 from Subtotal 1 to produce Subtotal 3

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Net Income (Subtotal 3) |  |
|-------------------------|--|

If subtotal 3 is over £130.00, the Leaving Care Personal Allowance is reduced by 50%. If subtotal 3 is over £150.00 the Leaving Care Personal Allowance and Clothing and Leisure Allowance cease.

This form should be completed by the young person and their social worker/personal adviser and/or their semi-independent support worker.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Date LCPA (Clothing Allowance / Leisure Allowance) Reduction/Adjustment to Commence. |  |
| The Leaving Care Personal Allowance is reduced by 50%.                               |  |
| The Leaving Care Personal Allowance and Clothing and Leisure Allowance cease.        |  |
| Income Retained.   |  |

## Appendix L

### OXFORDSHIRE - LEAVING CARE FINANCIAL SUPPORT CHART

- If you have left Foster Care or a Children’s Home, and you are an Eligible, Relevant, or a Former Relevant young person, this chart provides information about the financial support that Children Services can offer you. It is important to talk to your Social Worker/Leaving Care Personal Adviser about the allowances that may be available to you and what your responsibilities are when receiving them.
- With your Social Worker/Leaving Care Personal Adviser, explore what you may be entitled to and complete the chart.

| Entitlements                               | Comments  | Amount |
|--|---|--------|
| Care Leavers Personal Allowance            |   |        |
| Accommodation or Placement Support         |   |        |
| Education/Training/Employment Costs        |   |        |
| Clothing                                   |   |        |
| Birthday/Christmas and Festival Allowances |   |        |
| Health                                     |   |        |
| Key & Identity Documents                   |   |        |
| Travel & Contact Costs                     |   |        |
| Exceptional Needs Costs                    |   |        |
| Setting Up Home Grant Costs                |   |        |
| Other Payments and Allowances              |   |        |
|  | <b>Your Weekly Total</b><br><b>Your Monthly Total</b><br><b>Your Yearly Total</b> |        |