



FLINTSHIRE FINANCIAL POLICY CARE LEAVERS 2016

Draft

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1. Introduction

Evidence from research continues to demonstrate Children in care/care leavers are highly represented in socially excluded groups, largely because of care leavers having to make their transition to adulthood much earlier than their peers.

In attempting to readdress this balance the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and subsequent regulations, placed responsibilities upon local authorities to ensure clear strategies and plans are in place for children looked after that provide effective support as they make the transition from care to adulthood.

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 introduced new duties on local authorities to plan for looked after children, so that they have the support they need as they make their transition to the responsibilities of adulthood. The Act and its associated regulations and guidance aim to improve the life chances of young people.

In making decisions about a young person's support, Flintshire County Council recognises the need to respond to the diverse and differing needs of care leavers. As such individual circumstances, will always be considered and support should be clearly laid out within young people's pathway plans.

2. Legislation, Statutory Guidance and Regulations

The SSWBA Wales 2014 provides local authorities with powers to assist and prepare young people to leave care, through the provision of advising, assisting and befriending young people up to the age of 21 (25 if in education).

The act extended the types of services and the upper age limits of the young people local authorities were responsible for as corporate parents. The act defines and sets out the minimum requirement for groups of young people eligible for leaving care support.

Part 6 of the Act (looked after and accommodated children):provides for the circumstances in which local authorities **may** or **must** provide support for young people;

leaving, or who have left, local authority care

formerly accommodated in certain establishments

formerly fostered

with respect to whom special guardianship orders are or were in force

Section 104 of the Act defines six categories of young people in respect of leaving care and the main statutory obligations for each category. These categories replace those previously referred to under the Children Act 1989 of relevant, eligible, former relevant child, and qualifying.

The 6 groups eligible for services are:

Category 1 – a young person looked after aged 16-17

Category 2 – a care leaver under 18

Category 3 – care leaver aged 18 or over

Category 4 – a young person who reconnects to care for education and training purposes

Category 5 – a young person who left care under a Special Guardianship Order

Category 6 – a young person who did not qualify as a care leaver.

A pathway plan should be developed for young people in categories 1, 2, 3 and 4

A personal advisor must be appointed for young people in categories 1, 2, 3 and 4

The local authority must safeguard and promote the well-being of young people in category 2 by making sure they have enough money to live on; have a suitable place to live and are supported in relation to education, training or employment.

The local authority must, as appropriate to their well-being, help with the cost of living near their place of employment or education or training, make a grant towards education or training costs, including a one-off higher education bursary, and help with university / higher education or college holiday accommodation for young people in category 3.

Support must be given if needed by being helped with the cost of living near their place of education or training, holiday accommodation and having a grant towards education or training costs or one-off higher education bursary to young people in category 4.

If the local authority considers a young person in categories 5 or 6 need support, they must help with living expenses, the costs of living near employment or education and help with education or training costs or they may provide accommodation and holiday accommodation.

Regulations set out which local authority is responsible for providing aftercare services for young people in categories 5 and 6:

Young people who were formerly looked after the relevant authority is the one that last looked after them; or for young people who qualify under any of the other provisions, the relevant authority is the one in the area that the young person has asked for help.

3. Financial Support for Care Leavers

Living Allowances

3.1 Category 1 – a young person looked after aged 16-17 - Living in foster placements or residential placements

Young people should receive appropriate age allowances such as pocket money, toiletries, clothing, and leisure opportunities through their care provider. For young people 17-18 Flintshire County Council (FCC) encourages these allowances to be paid direct to young people's bank accounts, to enable early financial management and responsibility. FCC expects all young people to have access to a bank account and carers should encourage young people to make regular savings.

3.2 Category 2 – a care leaver under 18 - Living in Semi Independent/Supported accommodation

FCC service will pay a personal allowance direct into young people's bank accounts. This allowance will be equivalent to Department Of work and pensions benefit rate for young people, currently £57.90 per week.

Allowances will be paid on weekly, unless there are specific circumstances that require split payments and or where it is the view of the social worker/personal advisor that the young person is demonstrating difficulties in financial management.

3.3 Category 3 – care leaver aged 18 or over.

At 18 financial responsibilities for care leavers transfers from the local authorities to the department of work and pensions where the young person is not in employment. The accommodation status of young people has no impact on their eligibility for these benefits.

Income support/Universal Credit and housing benefit are available for young people aged 18 -21 who are enrolled or (accepted) onto a further education course prior to their 19th birthday.

Where Young people are not in employment, education or training then they will need to apply for job seekers allowance. Their personal advisor can provide support to enable young people make timely applications for benefits. FCC will provide a "Bridging Allowance" equivalent to Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) of 4 weeks as necessary providing a claim has been lodged with DSS, any extension must be approved by the Team manager

Lone parents and young people with disabilities

Young people who are lone parent or disabled who meet the criteria are eligible for benefits provided by department work and pensions, i.e. income support, disability living allowance, employment support allowance. As such this group, will not receive any

weekly living allowances from the FCC, aside from the transition top up allowances described below.

4. Additional Allowances

The celebration of a birthday and religious festival can be important events in young people's lives. As such FCC, will make the following allowance payments:

4.1 Birthdays

For young people living in foster care or residential settings this should be provided as part of the care offered by the placement.

For young people living in semi-independent (including supported lodgings) or those living independently, the allowance will be equivalent with young people in foster care, payments for 2018 - 2019 are as follows:

16th £217.90

17th £217.90

18th £217.90

19th £217.90

20th £217.90

21st £217.90

4.2 Cultural and Religious Festivals Allowances

The festival allowance will only be paid to young people who remain in contact with the Leaving Care Team.

The festival allowance is available to all young people up to 21yrs.

The allowance is £50.

Young people are given a choice as to which festival this allowance is paid for. Where no preference is indicated within a young person pathway plan, the allowance will be paid in time for the Christmas Holiday.

In addition Personal Advisors will draw up a list of isolated care leavers and purchase a food hamper at Christmas up to the value of £50 to be approved by the Team Manager.

4.3 Leaving Care Grants

A leaving care grant is available to young people in categories 1, 2, 3, and 4, who leave care to live independently. This grant is available to young people to equip their first

home via purchasing essential household items including the cost of removal, decoration and floor covering expenses. This grant is needs assessed up to the value £2,000.

The grant must always be spent collaboratively between the personal adviser and young person. Receipts should be retained by the personal adviser.

In addition, a first TV Licence and first insurance will be purchased for the young people.

Personal Advisers can also assist in accessing any grant available via other charities, community resources, including housing providers who may offer decorating allowances.

Personal Advisors will recommend charities such as refurbs to purchase larger household items.

All grants will be subject to the team manager's discretion.

4.4 Travel Costs

Young people placed in rural or out of county accommodation will be assisted with travel costs to maintain contact with services, peers and resources.

Travel costs will be provided via travel warrants, travel passes, or through reimbursing of expenditure upon production of travel tickets

4.5 Contact Associated Costs

For some groups of young people the local authority has a duty to promote contact with family members including significant others.

Young people aged up to 18:

FCC will provide funding for public transport costs to assist young people maintain contact with significant others and or family.

Travel costs will be provided via travel warrants, travel passes, or through reimbursing of expenditure upon production of travel tickets.

Travel to visit family/significant others outside of the UK will be considered in exceptional circumstances only.

All significant family/others must be identified within young people's pathway plans.

Costs will only be reimbursed as per contact arrangements specified in care plans. Where these are not clearly specified reimbursement will only be for a maximum of 2 contacts a month.

Young People aged 18 -21(25 if in education) contact costs:

Travel costs will be subject to the team manager's discretion.

4.6 General Clothing

16-18 year olds it is expected that young people leave care with suitable clothing and footwear, young people living in foster placements or residential placements clothing allowance should be met as part of the care package.

For young people living in semi-independent/supported lodgings accommodation their weekly allowance is expected to cover all your needs including clothing. However, FCC will provide an annual payment of £100 towards the cost of purchasing appropriate winter clothing and footwear. This will be paid directly into bank accounts and must be agreed with the team manager.

18 -21(25 if in education) year olds

FCC will not generally make payments to young people over 18 for the purchase of general clothing. Consideration may be given in exceptional circumstance to making one off payments to young people where the need is evidenced and following authorisation from a team manager.

Likewise, generally no payment will be made to young people living at home unless there are exceptional circumstances that have been agreed with a team manager.

4.7 Identity documents

FCC will meet the cost of the following initial documents:

Birth Certificate or copy;

Passport/travel document;

Provisional driving licence.

Any other documents to be approved by Team manager.

4.8 Starting Work Employment/Training

Category 1 16-18 year olds

For those young people in full time employment or employed as an apprentice or trainee, FCC services will provide a financial top up allowance (up to national minimum wage level) where their income falls below that set as the national minimum wage for this age group.

If young people are in part time employment a pro rata figure will be agreed for a top up. This will be agreed with the personal advisor and outlined in the pathway plan and subject to participation in regular reviews. This top up will cease were income increases to above the minimum wage or when the employment ends.

Young People will need to provide proof of earnings to access this support.

Category 2 - 18 -21-year-old (25 if in education)

FCC will provide a four week top up and 4 weeks' travel allowance for young people starting employment or a training scheme until first wage is received.

Unemployed

Where the young person is not engaged in employment and will be transitioning to welfare benefits, the service will provide up to four weeks' financial support (equivalent to local benefit rates for young people aged 18+) whilst benefit applications are being processed.

Any extension to this needs to be agreed by relevant team manager, with evidence that an application has been made.

4.9 Maternity Grants and care leavers as parents

FCC do not provide maternity grants or payments (unless exceptional circumstances - i.e. no recourse to public funds status). Social Workers and or Personal advisers can help enable young parents to maximise their income.

Young Parents Unemployed

Lone parents aged 16+ are eligible for financial support via the Department of Works and Pensions Benefit entitlement should not be affected by looked after status,

accommodation type or education status. (This excludes young people unable to access public funds).

Young Parents in Full-time Education

Students in higher education who are parents should be eligible to receive lone parent grants from the student loan company and may be eligible to receive benefits such as housing benefit depending on their circumstances.

Young Parents Who Are Working

Young parents who are in work may be eligible for Statutory Maternity Pay from their employer, in addition to this extra financial help may be available through Working Tax Credit.

Young People aged 18+ are eligible to claim financial support eleven weeks prior to the child's birth from the Department of Works and Pensions.

Personal advisors or specialist employment advisors within the employment services can assist parent's access appropriate benefit and grants.

In addition to the above young people regardless of age are eligible to receive the following payments subject to meeting the criteria:

Sure Start Maternity Grant - This is a one-off payment up to £500;

Healthy Start Vouchers - These are free weekly vouchers, generally used to spend on milk, plain fresh and frozen fruit and vegetables, and infant formula milk. You can also get free vitamins;

Child Benefit - if the child is living with young people.

For more detailed eligibility criteria information please visit ([GOV UK website](http://gov.uk))

4.10 Child Care Costs

FCC will not generally make any contributions towards child care costs. Social workers and personal advisors can assist in identifying funds via further and higher education establishments, care to learn fund, social fund and the department works and pensions.

In exceptional circumstances, i.e. young people with no access to public funds, an additional resource request can be made to the team manager.

It is expected that local resources such as sure start and children's centres have been explored before any additional resource request is made. Team managers can only consider exceptional contributions and not full costs.

4.11 Emergency Financial Support and Additional Needs

FCC will only provide emergency financial support, where it can be evidenced applications have been made and refused by universal services, i.e. Department of Works and Pensions, local Authority Social Fund services and college/university hardship funds.

Where it is assessed that emergency, support is required, the amount and type of support will be based upon individual needs and circumstances. Emergency Payments include defaults on requirements made by DWP and lost money.

The support will generally be via the provision of food vouchers, and or travel warrants. Cash payments will only be given in exceptional circumstances. Payment will be calculated at a daily rate equivalent to daily benefit entitlements (total benefit rate divided by 7).

Where young people make two or more requests for emergency payments then considerations should be given to providing young people with further assistance in budgeting/financial management before any additional payments are authorised.

FCC recognises that transitioning to adulthood can at times pose difficulties for some young people at any given time. In addition to this being independent can present with some emergency challenges that require a financial payment, if, contributions towards funeral costs or attire following the death of a close relative, loss of keys where living independently. As such and following discussion with a social worker/personal advisor FCC may provide discretionary funds for specific issues. Depending on the nature of emergency this should be agreed a team manager.

4.12 Social Activities and Leisure

Young people should be encouraged to pursue hobbies and interests, as well as actively engage in leisure pursuits throughout their childhood. Funding for these pursuits should be in accordance with young people care plan. For those young people living in foster care or residential placement these should be provided as part of the care package.

For young people living in semi-independent/supported living or independently FCC have made a commitment through our active 8, to young people up to the age of 21 to provide access a local leisure centre for a reduced rate.

Membership will only be supported at the rate of the local authority's provision and not private centres.

FCC will provide 10 driving lessons by an approved DVLA driving Instructor, the cost of the Theory Test and Practical

Driving Test or in the case of motor cycle FCC will provide the cost of Compulsory basic training (CBT) if identified as part of pathway plan and if the young person can evidence they have the means to continue with lessons.

5. Accommodation

5.1 Category 2 & 3, young people

FCC are responsible for accommodation cost for young people in these categories (except where the young person resides at home).

16-18 Young people living in foster care/supported living accommodation will be expected to pay a contribution towards living costs where their utilities and food are provided. The amount will be specified in the young person pathway plan and placement agreement. Carers will be expected to deduct the specified amounts from allowances they give to young people. FCC would expect this amount to be no more than £25 per young person.

5.2 Category 2 (18-21(25))

Care Leavers over the age of 18 are responsible for all costs associated with accommodation and can be assisted by the personal advisor to make appropriate claims for local housing living allowances and council tax benefit where appropriate.

The exception to this is where the young person is engaged in higher education). For young people in further education the FCC Services will provide accommodation costs for the duration of the course.

5.3 Private Accommodation: Rent Deposits

Where it is part of a young person's pathway plan that they move into private rented accommodation, assistance can be provided up to the maximum of one month's rent/one month's deposit. Approval will need to be obtained from the Team manager. Funding will not exceed the local housing allowance rates for the relevant local authority and checks will be made to ensure that the young person has the means to meet rent allowance when they become liable at the age of 18.

5.4 When I'm Ready

Where there is a plan for young people to remain with former foster carers under WIR Policy accommodation costs, will be in line with the WIR policy.

All requests for post 18 accommodation costs must be authorised as per the WIR policy and in advance of young people's 18th birthday.

5.5 Category 4 - Returning care leavers aged 21 - 25

Following an assessment of need FCC services will make contributions to assist young people with accommodation costs where it is evidenced that it is necessary to enable young people to pursue education/training.

Assistance will be based on assessed needs and an updated pathway plan. Assistance will only be provided for the duration of the course

6. Employment, Education and Training Incentives

6.1 Other entitlements can include:

Income Support - if they are in in 'Relevant Education' from there 18th birthday until 21st birthday and if they started or were enrolled or accepted on the course prior to his/her 19th birthday;

Discretionary learning funds - application via college.

6.2 Further Education/Training Support Package

In addition to the weekly living allowances outlined above, FCC services will provide a financial incentive for young people in further education, where it is part of the young person pathway plan and provides a continuous programme of education aimed at young people reaching their career aspirations (must be detailed in pathway plans)

The financial incentives will be paid for the duration of the course during term time only.

The support package will include if not covered by the student support fund from the educational establishment:

£10 Weekly incentive payment for full time education/training;

Annual Registration and exam fees;

Annual contribution towards textbooks identified as essential;

Annual contribution towards travel cost;

Purchase of a laptop and office student package for up to 1 pc;

Essential equipment related to the course;

One off payment for purchase of a college bag;

Annual payment towards purchase of stationary;

Cost associated with required field trips; within the UK;

Purchase of specialist or adequate clothing for work/college.

These incentives will not be affected by any college bursary or income from part time employment. Social Worker/Personal advisors are responsible for requesting these support packages and any payments authorised will be made direct into young people's bank accounts.

To qualify for this package individuals in are expected to evidence 90% attendance rates and to maintain regular contact with their social worker or personal advisors.

FCC will consider withdrawing funding where this is not adhered to.

6.3 Higher education Support Packages

Category 3 young people who go on to higher education studies can be provided with a higher education support package from FCC. This includes costs associated with accommodation and the higher education bursary of £2000

Care Leavers are a priority group for student maintenance grants. Lone parents and disabled students are priority groups for special supports grants. The service will assist young people in accessing appropriate grants and loans where they meet the criteria, to enable young people to meet the costs associated with course fees and costs of living.

It is expected that care leavers will apply for all loans and grants available

The Higher Education Support Package includes the following if not covered by the student support fund from the educational establishment:

Provision of laptop and a one-off student package (where this has not been accessed via the further education support package);

A grant towards accommodation costs which includes vacation accommodation also; this is usually payment of first term's accommodation then it is expected that the students grant will pay for the accommodation.

Annual grant towards living expenses; (maintenance allowance equivalent to JSA)

Incentive allowance of £10 per week during term time

Annual higher education bursary of 2000 over three years. (Paid in three instalments over two years);

Book and equipment allowance;

Funding of essential field trips;

Public transport allowance/grant.

One off grant towards graduation ceremony.

Individuals attending University are expected to evidence successful yearly completion of study to qualify for financial support in subsequent years. The service will only fund one university course.

Where financial support is provided, young people are expected to remain in touch with personal advisors, and provide evidence of continual attendance and successful completion of course work.

Post Graduate Courses

Personal advisors can assist young people up to 25 to identify financial support and should they wish to undertake post graduate courses. FCC services will contribute to post graduate courses as above, subject to a financial assessment and all other avenues of funding being explored.

6.4 Employment

Young people gaining employment will receive support with the following:

Transition to Employment allowance FCC will provide a four week top up and 4 weeks' travel allowance for young people starting employment or a training scheme until first wage is received.

A one-off grant to enable purchase of suitable interview clothes as necessary;

4 weeks' public transport travel grant for the most cost effective journey;

A one-off payment to purchase specific clothing/uniforms;

A one-off payment to purchase specific equipment.

6.5 Work Experience Opportunities

Young People participating in a recognised work experience programme such as Flintshire's BOOST will be supported with the following:-

Travel Costs

Incentive Allowance £10 per week

Specialist equipment/clothing as agreed with Team Manager

7. Health

7.1 Health related costs

Requests for assistance with health-related costs can only be considered in exceptional circumstances and via approval of Team Manager.

Young People in receipt of some welfare benefits may be exempt from National Health Service charges such as dental, sight test and prescriptions charges.

Young people under 19 and in full time employment are in the main exempt from National Health Service charges.

Young people on low incomes can apply for National Health Service low income scheme

8. Specific Groups

8.1 Care Leavers who are disabled

With the exception of weekly living payments care leavers who are disabled can access all allowances within this document assuming they meet the defined criteria. It is expected that living allowances for young people with disabilities are sources via department works and pensions. Allowance information and criteria can be found at www.gov.uk

8.2 Detained young people (Custody or Hospital)

If a young person is detained in hospital or custody, the majority of their financial allowances will be suspended.

Young People in Custodial settings will in the main not require the same level of financial support as those living in the community.

For young people looked after by virtue of remand status it is envisaged that financial support will be provided from family/significant others. If this is not possible and following a financial assessment the allowances listed below can be approved via team managers. If a young person in custody does not have family support then an assessment of their needs will be completed and any payments of a weekly allowance of £10 per week will be approved by the Team Manager.

Young people who are **detained** in hospital will be provided with personal allowance of (£25.00 per week) and eligible for the clothing, birthday, festival allowances until all benefits are in place.

8.3 Young People living at home

Parents of children looked after who have returned home are responsible for their overall financial support.

Request for additional financial support from FCC can be considered, however all welfare benefit entitlements must have been claimed for. Any support that is provided will be as a one-off payment of for a period of no longer than four weeks to enable benefit application to be made.

Young people who are subject to a care order and placed with parents will be entitled all the allowances in this document with the exception of the living allowance, clothing allowances and accommodation allowances.

9. Savings/Criminal Compensation

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 recommends services apply the principal utilised by the Department of Work and Pensions regulations governing Income Support (the Income Support (IS) (General) Regulations 1987). This sets out a scale whereby capital up to £6000.00 is disregarded and someone with savings of £16,000.00 or more is not entitled to assistance.

Where a young person's capital exceeds £6000.00 but is not more than £16,000.00 an amount corresponding to the excess is treated as a weekly contribution.

For every £250.00 of capital above £6000.00 young people will lose £1.00 per week of their living allowance Housing Benefit regulations sets out a similar scale whereby capital up to £6000.00 is disregarded and someone with capital assets of £16,000.00 or more is not entitled to assistance.

The details will be recorded in the Pathway Plan. Where a young person has been awarded a sum in compensation for a criminal injury, FCC is required to disregard that capital entirely.

This policy applies to young people who are or have been in care of FCC and/or met the eligibility criteria specified by the SSWBA Wales 2014.