

Financial Policy for Care Experienced People

The financial support provided to our Care Experienced People is determined by their status as defined in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000: The key terms which are used to describe the 4 statuses for care experienced people are described below:

Eligible care experienced person if:

- You are aged 16 or 17, and
- You are currently a young person in care, and
- You have been in care for a period of 13 weeks (91 days) or periods accumulating 13 weeks since the age of 14 including a period since your 16th birthday

Relevant – you are a Relevant care experienced person if:

- You are aged 16 or 17, and
- You are no longer cared for by the Local Authority but you have previously been an ‘Eligible’ care experienced person

Former Relevant – you are a Former Relevant care experienced person if:

- You are aged between 18 and 25 and before reaching 18 you were or had been a Relevant care experienced person, or
- Immediately before you stopped being cared for you were an Eligible care experienced person

Qualifying – you are a Qualifying care experienced person if:

- You are at least 16 but under 21, and
- You were a cared for child prior to the making of a Special Guardianship Order, which was in force when you reached 18, or
- If at any after you reached aged 16, you were no longer a child in care, or accommodated, or
- You were privately fostered and assessed to be in need

Financial Entitlements:

The Pathway Plan assessment will determine the young person’s financial needs; the Pathway Plan will outline the amount, timing and payment method that has been agreed. The Pathway Plan will be reviewed on a six monthly basis or within 28days of a significant change to the plan, and the young person’s financial position will be considered during the Pathway Plan review.

Personal Allowance

A weekly personal allowance will be paid to Eligible and Relevant care experienced people living in semi-independent accommodation including Supported Lodgings. The weekly payment tracks the equivalent Universal Credit rate for young people, currently set at £71.70 as of April 2024.

Where possible, allowances will be paid into the young person’s bank account. In some circumstances, particularly for those not in education, training or employment, an arrangement may be made for the young person to collect their allowances at the same time as attending for

a meeting with a Social Worker or Personal Adviser. In some circumstances young people may require assistance with managing their money; allowances may be split to require more frequent collection. In extreme circumstances a support worker, Social Worker or Personal Adviser may need to shop for provisions with the young person or provide allowances 'in kind' instead of providing cash.

For Care Experienced People living in Knowsley your Personal Advisor will be able to support you with making an early application for benefits in line with Knowsley's Joint Protocol between the Department for Work and Pension and Knowsley Children's Services.

Setting up Home

All Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant care experienced people are entitled to up to £2000 towards the cost of setting up home. It may be spent in stages and ideally the bulk of it will be spent for setting up in the young person's own independent accommodation. When the accommodation is being set up, consideration should be made in respect of the longevity of the stay to ensure the young person maximises on the items purchased.

The Social Worker or Personal Advisor will discuss with the young person the sort of things they can spend the money on, e.g. furniture and household items, assist the young person in balancing cost, value for money and choice, and will make these purchases with the young person. If this allowance has not been accessed by the time the young person's case is closed, a note will be made in the last Pathway Plan of the amount remaining. The allowance may be accessed at any time up to the young person's 25th birthday.

The Government has announced an increase to the Setting Up Home entitlement up to £3000, therefore all Former Relevant Care Experienced People with a birthday on or after 1st April 2023 will be entitled to this higher rate. All Care Experienced People accessing their setting up home entitlement will be encouraged to purchase contents insurance and a TV licence.

Clothing Allowance

All Eligible and Relevant care experienced people living in semi-independent, supported accommodation and all Former Relevant care experienced people up to age 21 including those in custody are entitled to £150 annually towards shoes and clothing.

Birthday Allowance

Eligible and Relevant care experienced people living in semi-independent, supported accommodation and all Former Relevant care experienced people up to age 21 including those in custody but excluding those in Staying Put are entitled to a birthday allowance:

16th Birthday £50

17th Birthday £50

18th Birthday £100

19th Birthday £50

20th Birthday £50

21st Birthday £233

Care Experienced People remaining with Staying Put hosts can expect to receive Birthday entitlement as funded by Fostering Allowances.

Birthday Allowance for Care Experienced People in Custody may be paid in instalments, or their entitlement saved to support them at time of their release. To be agreed with the Personal Advisor and detailed in the Pathway Plan.

Festival Allowance (Christmas/Eid/Hanukkah)

Eligible and Relevant care experienced people living in semi-independent, supported accommodation and all Former Relevant care experienced people up to age 21 including those in custody but excluding those in Staying Put are entitled to £100 Festival Allowance.

Care Experienced People remaining with Staying Put hosts can expect to receive Festival Allowance as funded by Fostering Allowances.

Festival Allowance for Care Experienced People in Custody may be paid in instalments, or their entitlement will be saved to support them at the time of release. To be agreed with the Personal Advisor and detailed in the Pathway Plan

Council Tax Discount

All Former Relevant care experienced people will receive 100% Council Tax discount up to the age of 25. If in a shared tenancy this will cover your relative share of the tenancy agreement. Payments will be made direct to the Local Authority Council Tax Department.

Identification documents

All Eligible and Relevant care experienced people living in semi-independent, supported accommodation and all Former Relevant care experienced people up to age 21 will be supported with the purchase of a Passport and Provisional driving licence, from 17 years of age.

Higher Education £2000 Bursary

As a Former Relevant Care Experienced Young Person in Higher Education the Local Authority will provide you with a £2,000 Higher Education Bursary. Your Personal advisor will arrange for this to be paid in instalments over the length of the course, with the first instalment should be paid within six weeks at the start of the course.

Improved 52-week Higher Education Accommodation Offer

To ensure our care experienced people in Higher Education do not experience hardship from the increase cost of living, from the September term 2023 all Former Relevant care experienced people will be provided with support to identify a 52-week accommodation plan, this may include you remaining with or returning to your Staying Put hosts during non-term time.

Your 52-week higher education accommodation plan will be established within your Pathway Plan. All Former Relevant care experienced people will be supported to identify suitable accommodation in line with average rental rates in the area of their university.

Financial support will be provided at a minimum of £100 per week towards accommodation and living costs. Young people will be supported to apply for Student Finance loans to cover course fees and additional living allowance costs by their Personal Advisor. For young people who get

or qualify for Income Support or Housing Benefit they may get the Special Support Grant instead of the Maintenance Grant.

The amount is the same as that available through the Maintenance Grant. People are likely to qualify for the Special Support Grant if:

- They are a single parent
- Their partner is also a student
- They have certain disabilities

Eligibility for the Special Support Grant does not affect how much can be accessed through the Maintenance Loan. It will also not be counted as income when working out entitlement to income-related benefits or tax credits. This grant is non-repayable.

Repayable Student Loans for fees and living costs are also available. Both may be applied for at the same time through the Student Loans Company. Some Universities and Colleges also pay Institutional Bursaries and extra bursaries for students who have been in care.

Your Social Worker and Personal Advisor will be able to assist in applying for all these and also to charitable organisations for any additional funding.

16-19 Further Education Bursary

As a Care Experienced Person you are eligible to receive a £1,200 16-19 Further Education Bursary. Details about the bursary can be seen at the Department for Education website. Bursary awards are managed by the colleges and are targeted towards the costs of transport, meals, books and equipment.

The colleges may use their discretion to make awards to young people in the way that they feel best fits the needs and circumstances of their students. Therefore arrangements vary from college to college and the Young Person's Team can provide further information about a specific college.

Receipt of a bursary is conditional on the student meeting agreed standards set by the college for example, relating to attendance and/or standards of behaviour. Awards to students undertaking courses lasting less than 30 weeks are made on a pro-rata basis. Your Social Worker and Personal Advisor will be able to assist you to apply for college support funds to help with costs associated with courses.

Further Education Books & Equipment Allowance

All Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant care experienced people engaged in Further Education will be provided with up to £200 towards books and equipment as required to support completion of their course. Driving Lessons All Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant Care Experienced People aged 17 to 21 will be offered up to 10

Driving lessons

To qualify for the driving lessons, you must be engaged in education, training or employment and be able to evidence financial savings or sufficient income to match fund further lessons.

Digital Inclusion (Laptop and Mobile phone) All Eligible and Relevant care experienced people living in semi-independent, supported accommodation and all Former Relevant care

experienced people up to age 21 will be provided with a repurposed council laptop and offered a mobile phone. The mobile phone will be provided with unlimited voice calls and texts.

Distribution of all devices will be subject to risk assessment and the agreement of a manager.

Care Experienced Forum

A participation incentive is offered to encourage active participation with our monthly Care Experienced Forum. All Care Experienced People attending planned sessions will be provided with a £20 voucher or equivalent to thank them for their engagement.

Free Gym Passes

Children who are cared for by Knowsley council and all Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant care experienced people up to the age of 21 will receive a free leisure pass to access many of the services provided in our Leisure Centres including swimming pool and gyms.

For children aged 13 years and under, the child and 1 carer will be allocated a leisure pass. This will enable the carer to accompany the child in their chosen activity. For those aged 14 to 21 years, only the young person will be allocated a leisure pass. Additional carers/supporting adults are also encouraged to see if they are eligible to access Passport to Leisure, which is discounted off peak leisure access for themselves.