

## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROCEDURE AND GUIDANCE

<b>CONTENTS</b>		
	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
	Contents	1
1.	Introduction	2
2.	Legal Framework	3
3.	Definition of who is Eligible for Support	3
4.	Assessment of Need and Pathway Plan	4
5.	Financial Support in respect of Accommodation	5
6.	Financial Support in respect of Education, Employment and Training	6
7.	Additional Financial Support	7
8.	Financial Assistance to Qualifying Young People	9
9.	Eligibility for Benefits	10
10.	Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children	10
11.	Transition to Adult Social Care Provision	11
12.	Setting Up Home Allowance	13
13.	Storage	15
14.	Incentive Scheme	15
15.	Emergency Assistance	16
15.	Complaints	16
16.	Appendix A – Financial Assistance Rates	18
17.	Appendix B – Setting Up Home Item List	24
18.	Appendix C – Care Leaver’s Offer	27

## 1. Introduction

The Financial Assistance Guidance for Looked After Young People aged 16 years plus reflects the individual needs of young people including diversity and supports their emotional, practical and financial transition to adulthood. It supports young people looked after in making life choices and maximising their allowances and the support available to them.

The Financial Assistance Guidance for Looked After Young People aged 16 years plus should be read in conjunction with the Children's Social Care Finance Policy and Procedures and reference should be made to the Corporate Finance Procedures (a). Reference should also be made to the Care Leavers Offer (b), Guidance (c) and Leaflets (d) available for Young People and their Carers. The information is also available to Young People, their Carers and all professionals working with young people looked after on the Website(e).

The Authority has a duty to provide financial support to young people who are care leavers.

This guidance sets out the financial assistance available to young people who are leaving care in order to support them to make informed decisions about their education, employment and training opportunities, to help them to achieve economic well-being and make a positive and successful transition to adulthood.

The Authority is the 'corporate parent' for young people looked after and leaving care and their role is to mirror the support a family would provide to their child, including offering a degree of flexibility depending upon the needs of the young person to ensure that they can become financially competent and capable when they reach adulthood. It is recognised that young people are individuals and will have differing needs.

This Guidance sets out the financial assistance available to young people who are leaving care. The specific financial support available to a young person will be based on the Assessment of Need that has been undertaken with the young person, parents, carers, extended family and all relevant professionals. The Assessment of Need will inform the Pathway Plan, which is completed for all Looked After Children. The Pathway

Plan will specify the financial assistance available to the young person in accordance with this policy; including the conditions on which the financial assistance is made available, the frequency of and arrangements for payments, the sanctions to be applied should the financial assistance be abused and the process of reviewing progress against the Pathway Plan.

Financial Assistance Rates are calculated using Job Seekers Allowance, Boarding Out rates and regulatory financial allowances.

#### Reference Notes

- a) Corporate Finance Procedures
- b) Care Leavers Offer
- c) Care Leavers Guidance
- d) Leaflets / Young Person's Guide
- e) Website link for Care Leavers Information

## 2. Legal Framework

The policy has been developed in accordance with:

- a) The Children's Act 1989
- b) The Children Leaving Care Act 2000
- c) The Children Act 2004
- d) The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers
- e) Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010

## 3. Definition of Who Is Eligible For Support

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

	<b>Definition</b>
Eligible	A young person who is aged 16 or 17 years of age and has been looked after by the Local Authority for a period of at least 13 weeks since the

	age of 14 years - some of the 13 weeks being after their 16 <sup>th</sup> or 17 <sup>th</sup> birthday.
Relevant	A young person who was previously an eligible young person but who is no longer looked after and is under the age of 18 years.
Former Relevant	A young person who has reached the age of 18 but not 21 and who was eligible and / or relevant prior to becoming 18. Where a young person is being supported with education or training they remain a former relevant young person to the end of the agreed programme, even where that takes the young person beyond the age of 21 years.
Qualifying	A young person who doesn't meet the criteria for being an eligible young person but who is or was a looked after young person for example where a young person has no parent to turn to for help or where the parent does not have the capacity to provide assistance. Young People can be deemed 'Qualifying' for example as a result of being looked after immediately prior to becoming subject to a Special Guardianship Order or subject to a private fostering arrangement.

#### 4. Assessment of Need and Pathway Plan

In order to identify a young person's needs in respect of financial assistance, an Assessment of Need and Pathway Plan must be completed. Preparation for transition to adulthood and leaving care should be integral to the care planning process throughout the young person's time in care.

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 requires that a Pathway Plan must be in place to address the young person's future needs by the time the young person reaches 16 years but no longer than three months after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday unless they were not looked after at that time, in which case it is three months after the date they became looked after. The Pathway Plan should be prepared for all eligible young people and continued for all relevant and former relevant young people, being reviewed on a regular basis.

The participation of care leavers is vital to effective pathway planning and it is important that they are provided with all the appropriate information regarding their options and entitlements to enable them to participate fully and make life choices.

Each young person's pathway plan must be based on and include their care plan and will set out the actions that must be taken by the responsible authority, young person, their parents, carers and the full range of agencies so that each young person is provided with the services they need to enable them to achieve their aspirations and make a successful transition to adulthood.

The assessment of need informs the Pathway Plan, which must address the young person's health and development, education, employment and training, contact arrangements with family and friends, social and leisure activities, the young person's financial capabilities and money management capacity, accommodation, support, care and contingencies arrangements. Each of these core elements of the Pathway Plan potentially requires some level of financial assistance or allowance.

#### 5. Financial Support In Respect of Accommodation

Eligible young people who remain in their foster placement or residential care placement will have their accommodation costs met by the Authority. They will continue to receive Birthday and Festivities Allowances.

The costs of accommodation and birthday and festivity allowances are supported by the ..... Budget and is managed by the Head of Service for Cared for Children in partnership with the Head of Service for Commissioning.

The allowance rates for eligible young people can be obtained from the Finance Officer.

The Authority will fund the cost of appropriate accommodation for young people up to the age of 18 yrs.

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

Young people with a disability may be entitled to additional benefits and these are taken into consideration when undertaking the means tested benefit assessment.

Where a young person has received a Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA) payment, they will be supported in seeking independent financial advice. Further information relating to the means tested assessment can be located in the Staying Put Procedure (b).

Where a young person is assessed as not having the capacity to manage their financial affairs, legal and financial advice and representation will be considered. Approval for independent legal and financial advice lies with the Head of Service.

Support will be given to young people to assist them to apply for suitable housing in order to meet their needs.

A young person may be eligible to continue to reside with their foster carers beyond the age of 18 in accordance with the Staying Put Policy.

Financial support may be available in respect of accommodation costs (e.g. a deposit or bond in relation to rented accommodation) where such support is not available from other sources. In addition, a bursary may be available towards the cost of the course. The level of financial support will be discussed and agreed as part of the young person's Pathway Plan.

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

See Appendix A for specific allowances.

#### Reference Notes

- a) <https://www.gov.uk/foster-carers/help-with-the-cost-of-fostering>
- b) Staying Put Procedure

#### 5. Financial Support In respect of Education, Employment and Training

Eligible relevant and former relevant young people will be supported to pursue education, training and employment. The Government's 16-19 Bursary Fund provides a

bursary per year to young people in care and care leavers and it is expected that transport, meals, books and equipment costs will be met from this bursary. Young people will be assisted to apply for a bursary from the relevant school, college or training provider. Information regarding this Fund can be found on the following website <https://www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund/overview>

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

The costs associated with education, employment and training are supported by the ..... **Budget** and is managed by the Head of Service for Cared for Children.

See Appendix A for specific allowances.

## 6. Additional Financial Support

The Authority will maintain eligible and relevant young people who live independently by giving them a maintenance allowance, equivalent to the prevailing Job Seekers Allowance benefit rate for a single person under the age of 25.

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

Financial support will be made available to young people to assist with costs associated with special needs such as disability and pregnancy. These will be identified as part of the young person's Assessment of Need and agreed as part of the Pathway Plan.

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

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

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

Former relevant young people will be entitled to membership of the Authority's Leisure Centres which will enable them to use specified leisure facilities within the borough. The extent to which facilities are used will be monitored and the Authority may withdraw membership if usage levels are low.

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

- Maintaining contact with family and significant others;
- Social activities, hobbies and cultural activities / outings;
- Maintaining a young person's cultural and religious needs;
- Obtaining important documents associated with identity i.e. birth certificate and one additional form of identification.
- Transport costs not related to education, employment, training or contact arrangements, but which are specified within the Assessment of Need and Pathway Plan, taking consideration of the young person's individual circumstances.

Eligible young people may be entitled to membership of the Authority's Leisure centres which will enable them to use specified leisure facilities within the borough. The extent to which facilities are used will be monitored and the Authority may withdraw membership if usage levels are low.

The costs associated with the above activities and needs are supported by the ..... **Budget** and is managed by the Head of Service for Cared for Children.

<b>Financial Support</b>	<b>Budget Code</b>	<b>Responsible Manager</b>
Maintenance Allowance		Set by the Local Authority
Birthday and Festivities Allowance		Set by the Local Authority
Driving Lessons, Driving Test and Licence		Practice Manager
Leisure Pass		Practice Manager
Contact		Practice Manager
Social activities, hobbies and cultural activities / outings		Practice Manager
Transport Costs		Practice Manager
Prom Outfit / Transport		Practice Manager
Lap Top		Head of Service
Documents		Practice Manager
Emergency Assistance		Practice Manager
To support special needs		Practice Manager
Pregnancy and parenthood		Practice Manager
Storage		Head of Service

## 7. Financial Assistance to Qualifying Young People

The primary financial support role for qualifying young people is the responsibility of the Department for Work and Pensions. In exceptional circumstances the Authority may provide financial assistance where this is deemed necessary to protect the welfare of the young person and where it cannot be made available by any other agency. An assessment of need will be undertaken to establish whether the qualifying young person requires advice and assistance and a plan developed with the young person outlining the support to be provided. The plan would be recorded as a Pathway Plan.

The Local Authority may consider financial assistance where this is connected with the young person's employment, education or training for example where the young person is in full time further or higher education, is under 25 years of age and qualifies for advice and assistance, or would have done if they were under 21 years, in relation to securing vacation accommodation. Additionally disabled young people who have been provided with short term breaks may be in need of financial assistance for example in respect of high communication needs.

Support requested in respect of a qualifying young person should be discussed with the Team Manager prior to the assessment of need being completed to ensure that the criteria is met and recommendation for financial support to be approved by Head of Service.

#### 8. Eligibility for Benefits

Once a young person reaches the age of 18 years they are able to claim the same range of benefits as other adults. Former relevant young people will be advised by their allocated worker regarding claims for their housing benefit and will be responsible for their own rent and household bills. Support will be made available to young people as identified in their Pathway Plan, to maximise their income from benefits, education and training allowances and employment.

Additional Advice is available on the following websites

[http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/england/benefits\\_e.htm](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/england/benefits_e.htm)

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits>

<http://www.welfarerights.net/home.php>

#### 9. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) making the transition from care to adulthood have both a leaving care status and an immigration status in addition to their placement and accommodation, education, health, financial, religious and cultural needs. Planning transition to adulthood for UASC is a particularly complex process that needs to address the young people's care needs in the context of wider asylum and

immigration legislation and how these needs 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 immigration issues. Planning may initially have to be based around short term achievable goals whilst entitlement to remain in the UK is being determined.

Pathway planning for the majority of UASC who do not have 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 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.

The costs associated with the young person returning to their country of origin are supported by the ..... Budget and is managed by the Head of Service for Cared for Children.

Financial support for looked after UASC should reflect their needs as looked after young people (eligible care leavers) and their immigration needs. Pathway plans should address funding arrangements for education and training and how a young person's immigration status may limit education, training and employment opportunities. Pathway plans should always consider the implications for the young people if their application to extend their leave to remain is refused, or their appeal against refusal of that application is dismissed. In such circumstances the person may become ineligible for further support and assistance because of the effect of Schedule 3 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

## 10. Transition to Adult Social Care Provision

Local authorities may provide community care services to individual adults with needs arising from physical, sensory, learning or cognitive disabilities and impairments, or from mental health difficulties. Increasingly, support is self-directed and delivered through personal budgets, following self assessment and person-centred support planning. Young people moving into adulthood and the people close to them need high quality, accessible information about personalisation from the age of 14 so that their planning can be within the context of knowing the resources that will be available for their support.

Eligibility Criteria for Adult Social Care (a) requires local authorities to have in place arrangements to identify individuals who may need a variety of services as they move from youth to adulthood. When undertaking assessments and re-assessments, local authorities are required to ensure that marked changes in the type, level and source of support should be managed very carefully as these are usually not in the best interests of people using services.

Adult Social Care Policies and Procedures can be viewed via the link at the end of this section.

Adult Social Care Policies regarding charging arrangements and in applying these will take into account their corporate parenting responsibilities towards care leavers. Care Leavers who transfer to Adult Social Care Services should be made aware of any charging policy and the impact on any financial support or arrangements (c).

Where disabled young people meet the eligibility criteria for adult placement schemes, the possibility of their former foster carers becoming their adult placement carers should be considered, so that both the young person and foster carers transfer to an adult social care service. Support in accordance with the requirements of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 (d) should be ensured. Support should also be provided in accordance with the Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000 (e) and Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004 (f) combined policy guidance. Carers have a right to an assessment, which takes into account their outside interests (work, study, leisure) and provide services to them directly and/or support carers by providing them with a direct payment to enable them to purchase carers' services for themselves (g).

A Personal Advisor will be allocated to all eligible young people including those with disabilities from an agreed age, which enables sufficient planning and support to be facilitated.

Where it is likely that a young person leaving care will need services into adulthood, a referral to Adult Social Care should be made when the young person is 14 years of age and an adult services worker should contribute to pathway planning from age 16 onwards, and the change of lead worker from one service to the other should be determined within the planning process taking account of the young person's wishes and assessed needs. Transfer in respect of key worker and financial responsibility will take place at 18 years of age.

The Commissioning Teams should be notified of all young people who may require transition to Adult Social Care Services at an early stage in their transition planning but no later than 16 years of age.

Where disabled and vulnerable care leavers transfer to, and become the responsibility of, Adult Care Services, local authorities' leaving care teams and PAs should ensure that young people do not lose out on any leaving care entitlements. Care leavers should not be disadvantaged financially by transferring to a different service. Pathway plans and transition plans should be used to evidence young people's financial abilities and to provide a financial framework that sets out the allowances and benefits young people are entitled to, and who will assist them to manage these allowances and benefits.

#### Reference Notes

- a) Eligibility Criteria for Adult Social Care
- b) Adult Social Care Procedures
- c) Adult Social Care Charging Policy
- d) Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- e) Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000
- f) Carers (Equal Opportunities Act) 2004
- g) Carers Assessment Procedure

#### 11. Setting Up Home Allowance

In line with the Government's Care Leaver Strategy – A Cross Departmental Strategy for Young People Leaving Care, October 2013 (a), The Setting Up Home Allowance has been increased to £2,000 in line with the recommendations made. This allowance will be made available to eligible, relevant and former relevant young people to assist them in setting up their own home.

The allowance will be provided to children and young people to ensure appropriate equipment and household items are obtained. Young People will be supported in respect of the Setting Up Home Allowance to maximise their choices about how they furnish their homes and maximise their allowance. The level of support required will be identified within the Assessment of Need and Pathway Plan and may not always involve a Personal Advisor accompanying the young person. Information has been developed for young people advising them of the arrangements in respect of the Setting Up Home Allowance (c).

In addition to the setting up home allowance, an additional allowance may be provided where the young person is a parent of a child who is under the age of one year at the time the young person moves into the accommodation and where the child resides with the young person. The allowance is to assist with the additional household needs of a baby / child and may be paid if no such assistance is available from the Benefits Agency.

The Local Authority recognises that the first move a Young Person makes may not be successful and therefore may require additional support second time around. The DfE highlights that local authorities should 'make sure that young people are provided with the opportunities they need, which will include offering them more than one chance as they grapple with taking on the responsibilities of adulthood'. Guidance in respect of such circumstances has been included in the Care Leavers Offer (d).

Young People should be supported in respect of transition planning at an early stage and the Independence Training Package implemented via the Personal Advisor undertaking the Virtual Setting Up Allowance Spending Session.

In order to maximise the Setting up Home Allowance, the young person will need to consider where they purchase the items from and be given the opportunity to 'shop

around'. The Pathway Plan will identify whether the young person requires support in purchasing items, however where cash is to be provided, for example purchasing an item from a Charity Shop, the Personal Advisor will accompany the young person.

The costs associated with Setting Up Home Allowances are supported by the ..... **Budget** and is managed by the Head of Service for Cared for Children.

Where a young person has received their full entitlement to Stepping Up Allowance and require additional support, the Second Chance Protocol provides information as to how the Local Authority will consider further assistance.

#### Reference Notes

- a) Government's Care Leaver Strategy – A Cross Departmental Strategy for Young People Leaving Care, October 2013
- b) Setting Up Home Procedure
- c) Young People's Guide – Setting Up Home Procedure
- d) Second Chance Protocol
- e) Virtual Setting Up Allowance Spending Session
- f) Second Chance Protocol

#### 12. Storage

There may be occasions where a young person needs support to store their belongings for example if they are in custody. The Local Authority will support young people in storing their belongings for a maximum of 6 months. Approval for storage arrangements lies with the Head of Service.

#### 13. Incentive Scheme

The authority has identified all financial support young people are entitled to and ensures that this is paid in a timely manner and to all young people meeting the eligibility criteria.

The authority wishes to encourage and facilitate all young people looked after and leaving care to maximise their life chances by engaging in education, employment and

training and to enjoy social and physical activities. In order to support and encourage young people the authority may consider the use of incentives or rewards in respect of achievement. Any such incentive or reward would be agreed with the Young Person and their carer and be included in the Pathway Plan, and be reviewed on a regular basis. Where the incentive or reward is not operating as anticipated, the Personal Advisor will work with the young person to identify changes and review / update the Pathway Plan accordingly. The Pathway Plan will also clearly indicate under what circumstances such incentives or rewards may be suspended or removed.

#### 14. Emergency Assistance

The Authority may also provide emergency funds to assist a young person in exceptional circumstances where this is deemed necessary. Such assistance will only be made available when other possibilities have been considered and where the young person has taken all reasonable steps to remedy the particular situation. The Local Authority will ensure that all alternative support mechanisms have been explored including Food Bank Vouchers, and will purchase the required items rather than provide cash.

Emergency assistance would usually relate to urgent support which cannot be obtained from other sources for example in relation to food or fuel expenses.

Advice and guidance will be available to a young person to ensure he / she does not become reliant on emergency assistance and they will be supported with debt advice and management. Finance and budget management is a significant part of the Assessment of Need and Pathway Plan which is reviewed on regular basis. All young people looked after are supported in opening a Bank account and where possible all allowances are paid through their account.

The costs associated with Emergency Payments are supported by the ..... Budget and is managed by the Head of Service for Cared for Children.

#### 15. Complaints

All complaints from young people will be dealt with as per the authorities Complaint Procedure (a) and taken seriously. The outcome of complaints from young people will be referred to the Corporate Parenting Board for consideration and to inform learning and development.

All complaints from young people looked after will be shared with the Complaints officer.

If a young person is not happy with the Assessment of Need or Pathway Plan in respect of the financial support offered to them, they should attempt to resolve the disagreement through their social worker or their Team Manager, who will respond within 14 days.

If the complaint cannot be resolved in this way the young person can make a complaint via the Authority's Complaints Procedure.

Where the complaint relates to a proposed change to a pathway plan, the young person's accommodation or a service they are receiving, the decision may need to be deferred or frozen until the complaint has been considered.

The young person can access advocacy (b) via The Children's Rights Officer at any stage and is provided with advice and information regarding this service by their allocated worker and in Statutory Reviews.

#### Reference Notes

a) Complaint Procedure

b) Advocacy Information

## Financial Assistance Rates

2014

## Living Allowances

Type of Financial Assistance	Who and what is it for?	How Much?
Maintenance Allowance	A maintenance allowance is paid into the bank account of eligible and relevant young people living independently. The weekly amount is equivalent to the Job Seekers Allowance rate for a single person under the age of 25 years.	£57.35 per week (2014) (JSA rate)
Clothing Allowance	A clothing allowance is also available for eligible and relevant young people living independently.	£240 per year
Birthday Allowance	A birthday allowance is available for eligible and relevant young people. The amount changes depending on your age and is paid once per year.	£50.00 for 16 year olds, £75.00 for 17 year olds, £100.00 for 18 year olds.
Festival Allowance	A festival allowance is available for eligible and relevant young people.	£50 per year

## Staying Put

Type of Financial Assistance	Who and what is it for?	How Much?
Staying Put	For eligible young people living with Foster Carers, you can choose to remain in placement after your 18 <sup>th</sup> Birthday. The carer will continue to receive financial assistance	See Staying Put Procedure Financial Assistance.
Carers Financial Support	Refer to Staying Put guidance	See Staying Put Procedure Financial Assistance.
Young Person's	Refer to Staying Put guidance	See Staying Put

Financial Support		Procedure Financial Assistance.
Young Person's Contributions	Refer to Staying Put guidance	See Staying Put Procedure Financial Assistance.

### Setting Up Home

Type of Financial Assistance	Who and what is it for?	How Much?
Setting Up Home Allowance	The Setting Up Home Allowance is provided to young people who are moving into their own independent accommodation. They may be eligible, relevant or former relevant.	£2,000 (one off payment)
Setting Up Home Allowance as a parent	An additional allowance may be provided where the young person is a parent of a child who is under the age of one year at the time the young person moves into the accommodation and where the child resides with the young person. The allowance is to assist with the additional household needs of a baby / child and may be paid if no such assistance is available from the Benefits Agency.	£250 (one off payment)

### Education, Employment and Training

Type of Financial Assistance	Who and what is it for?	How Much?
Job Interview, Work Clothes and Equipment	Financial support is available for eligible, relevant and former relevant young people to assist in attending a job interview for example new clothes, equipment or other costs.	£75 (one off payment)
Equipment, Books and Achievements	Young people should initially apply for a grant or bursary to cover the cost of college equipment through the organisation they	At the discretion of the Practice Manager

	<p>attend. The following websites will provide further information.</p> <p><a href="https://www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund">https://www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund</a>  <a href="https://www.gov.uk/grant-bursary-adult-learners">https://www.gov.uk/grant-bursary-adult-learners</a></p> <p>Additional assistance may be available with discretionary payments towards the cost of books, equipment, field trips etc.</p> <p><u>GCSE Exam achievements or equivalent and Level 1/Level 2 NVQ</u>  1-2 passes regardless of grades  3-5 passes regardless of grades  6 + passes regardless of grades</p> <p><u>'A' Level passes or equivalent / NVQ 3, BTEC National Diploma</u>  Young People will receive a payment per unit passed. BTEC and NVQs are equivalent to 3 'A' levels.</p>	<p>Achievements in respect of</p> <p>Up to a maximum of £50</p> <p>Up to a maximum of £50</p>
16 – 19 Bursary Fund	<p>The Government's 16-19 Bursary Fund provides a bursary young people in care and care leavers and it is expected that transport, meals, books and equipment costs will be met from this bursary. Young people will be assisted to apply for a bursary from the relevant school, college or training provider.</p>	£1,200 per year
Higher Education Bursary	<p>Where a young person is attending University or College on a Higher Education course which will last for a minimum period of two years, they will receive a bursary, which is a grant to support you study at university or college. The £2,000 will be paid in instalments over the time you are at University or College.</p>	£2,000 paid over the duration of the course

	The frequency and amount of money will be agreed and recorded in your Pathway Plan. Please note if you stop attending University or College then the remainder of the Bursary will not be paid.	
Accommodation costs whilst in Higher Education	A weekly payment will be made to support the cost of halls of residence accommodation whilst at University or College.	£50 per week
Holiday Accommodation costs whilst in Higher Education	Financial assistance may also be given if young people cannot stay at University or College accommodation during holiday times. Additional support would be provided to fund alternative appropriate accommodation.	To be assessed
Maintenance Allowance whilst in Higher Education	A weekly allowance is paid to all young people attending University or College for the duration of their studies.	£57.35 per week (JSA rates)
Additional Support for young people in Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A lap top and printer will be provided for each young person attending University or College</li> <li>▪ Book Allowance</li> </ul>	Purchased by the Authority (if required)  £150 per year maximum

Please note that young people attending Higher Education Courses will be supported to apply for all relevant University Bursaries and financial assistance available for Care Leavers. The young person would be supported via their Pathway Plan and Personal Advisor to monitor their financial situation and ensure that they are able to manage their finances and reduce risk of debt post-graduation. The financial assistance set out above in relation to Higher Education Courses will be paid where funding from other sources e.g. the educational establishment, is not available. Financial assistance will only be made available subject to provision of receipts / proof of expenditure.

### General Financial Support

Type of Financial	Who and what is it for?	How Much?
-------------------	-------------------------	-----------

Assistance		
Prom Outfit / Transport	Financial Assistance is paid to eligible and relevant young people towards the cost of their Prom including an outfit and transport.	£125 (one off payment)
Lap Top	All eligible and relevant young people will be provided with a lap top to support their education	Purchased by the Local Authority
Documents	All eligible young people will have a passport and be provided with a copy of their Birth Certificate	Passport £72.50 Birth certificate £10
Driving Lessons and Licence	All eligible young people will be supported in respect of driving lessons and licence.	10 Driving Lessons or max £200 Provisional licence £55 Practical test £61 Theory test £30
Emergency Assistance	It is recognised that emergencies sometimes happen and therefore eligible, relevant and former relevant young people will be supported in emergency situations. Support will be provided via food or food vouchers or fuel cards.	At the discretion of the Practice Manager
Transport	Young people may need to use public transport to visit family and friends or to attend social activities.	Weekly £15 (max)
Leisure Passes	A leisure pass will be provided and should be identified within the care plan / pathway plan and subject to review	At the discretion of the Practice Manager
To support special needs	Disability specialist counselling / therapy equipment legal advice financial advisor (CICA)	At discretion of Head of Service / Assistant Director
Pregnancy and parenthood	child care clothing	£250 Maternity Grant
Welcome Gift and Card	When a young person moves into independent accommodation they will	At the discretion of the Practice Manager

	receive a welcome card and gift.	
Storage	Support will be provided in respect of Storage where the young person is assessed as requiring this support	At discretion of Head of Service

## SETTING UP HOME ALLOWANCE CHECKLIST

<b>Kitchen</b>	
Cooker	
Cost of Installation	
Fridge Freezer	
Ironing Board	
Iron	
Vacuum Cleaner	
Tea Towels / Oven Glove	
Washing up Bowl and Brush, Dish Cloth, Pan Scrub	
Set of Pans	
Cutlery Set	
Kitchen Knives	
Kitchen Utensils	
Ovenware	
Crockery, Glasses, Cups	
Chopping Boards	
Kettle	
Tin Opener	
Bread Bin	
Long Brush / Dustpan and Brush / Dusters	
Washing Machine at the discretion of the Team Manager	
Mop / Bucket	
Microwave	
Toaster	
Clothes Maiden	
Cleaning Materials	
Total Cost	
<b>Lounge</b>	
3 piece suite (second hand)	
Coffee Table	
TV	

Table and 4 chairs	
Lamp	
Clock	
Total Cost	
<b>Bathroom</b>	
Towels (1 bail)	
Toilet Brush	
Bin	
Laundry Basket	
Bath Mat	
Total Cost	
<b>Bedroom</b>	
Bed, Mattress and Headboard	
Double Duvet and Pillow x 2	
Duvet cover, pillow case, fitted sheets (2 sets	
Wardrobe	
Chest of Drawers	
Coat Hangers	
Mirror	
Lamp	
Bedside Locker / cabinet	
Total Cost	
<b>General</b>	
Carpet / Underlay	
Curtains	
Mattress Protector	
TV Licence	
Bulbs	
Home Insurance (Contents)	
House Alarm	
Smoke Alarm	
Carbon Monoxide Alarm	
Fire Blanket	
First Aid Kit	

Spare Keys	
Installation of gas or electrical goods by approved fitter	
Removal costs	
Decorating Grant	
DIY / practical assistance to ensure the accommodation is furnished to a sufficient standard	
Deposit or rent in advance	
Suitcase	
Total Cost	
<b>Total Setting Up Home Allowance:</b>	<b>CURRENT FIGURE: £2000.00</b>

The Local Authority recognises that the first move a Young Person makes may not be successful and therefore may require additional support second time around. Additional support may be considered in exceptional circumstances.



# Rochdale Children's Social Care

## Care Leavers Offer

*January 2014*

# Content

No.	Page
1 Introduction	3
2 Strategy	4
3 Legislation, Regulation and Guidance	4
3.1 Legal Definitions	5
3.2 Entitlements to Services	6
4 Monitoring and Reporting	9
5 Role of Social Worker and Personal Advisor	9
5.1 Duties to Eligible, Relevant, Former Relevant and Qualifying Young People	10
6 Needs Assessment	12
7 Vision & Strategy	13
8 Education	14
9 Employment	15
10 Financial Assistance	16
11 Health	17
12 Housing	18
13 Justice System	19
14 Ongoing Support	20
15 Summary	21

## 1. Introduction

This strategy sets out the principles and the process by which Rochdale MBC, along with other agencies aims to make sure that Rochdale's care leavers are provided with comprehensive personal support so that they achieve their potential as they make their transition to adulthood. It has been informed by the HM Government Care Leavers Strategy – October 2013.

Care leavers come into contact with a range of services including Housing, Health, employers and further education; yet they are often not recognised as a priority group for services.

Improving how Rochdale MBC and partner agencies support young people leaving care is crucial to improving the lives of this vulnerable group of people.

Care leavers require services which are integrated, easy to access and embedded within local communities.

This care leaver's offer will therefore concentrate on the following core areas:

- Education
- Employment
- Financial Assistance
- Health
- Accommodation
- Justice System
- Ongoing support
- Identity
- Safeguarding
- Achieving

## 2. Strategy

All young people are likely to need support during the transition to adulthood. Young people leaving care are likely to be particularly vulnerable due to their previous life experiences and often more limited immediate family support. Rochdale does not see leaving care as a process driven by the age of the young person, rather that plans for each individual will be based on a systematic assessment of their emotional maturity and coping skills.

Transition to adulthood is often a turbulent time: transitions are not always sequential. Young people can be regarded as an adult in some areas but not in others. For many young people, their transition to adulthood can be extended and delayed until they are emotionally and financially ready and they have the qualifications they need and aspire to, so that they have the opportunity to achieve their economic potential.

Young people from care may not have this option. Whilst most young people know they can call on the support of their families to help them through unforeseen difficulties, care leavers may not be able to rely on family support if things do not work out as they make their journey into adulthood. With this in mind and following the 'spirit' of the Leaving Care Act 2000 and associated Regulations it is the intention of Rochdale MBC to act as a 'good' Corporate Parent to offer support to our children

who have left care so they feel that they can turn to us as their support. This may be in the form of advice and assistance or more pragmatic support as any other good parent would offer.

All care leavers should have access to services which are appropriate to their needs, including those which arise from their gender, racial origin, cultural and linguistic background, sexual orientation and disability.

Children's Social Care, in partnership with others, will act as a 'good parent'. This means accepting that the transition to adulthood can include more than one change of direction or breakdown in arrangements, when the young person will need support and encouragement to learn from what has happened, and start anew.

This strategy incorporates the principles of the National Care Leavers Strategy 2013 and covers the following areas: education, employment, health, housing, criminal justice and financial support.

### **3. Legislation, Regulation and Guidance**

- Children Act 1989
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Children Act 2004
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2. Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (March 2010)
- The children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3: Planning Transitions to Adulthood for Care leavers (including the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010)
- Statutory guidance on Promoting the Health and Well-Being of Looked After Children (DoH) 2009.
- Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (DOH) 2010

#### **3.1 Legal Definitions**

The following legal definitions are established through the relevant Legislation and Regulations

Definitions

##### Eligible

An Eligible child is:

- (a) looked after,
- (b) aged 16 or 17, and
- (c) has been looked after by a local authority for a period of 13 weeks, or periods amounting in total to 13 weeks, which began after he reached 14 and ended after he reached 16.

Note: Looked After Children who are subject to care orders who return home to their parent/person with Parental Responsibility remain looked after, and placement with Parent Regulations apply. As such they remain Eligible young people.

### Relevant

A Relevant child is:

- (a) not looked after,
- (b) aged 16 or 17, and
- (c) was, before ceasing to be looked after, an Eligible child, or
- (d) were detained in custody (pursuant to a court order) or in a hospital, but were looked after immediately prior to their detention for a period, or periods amounting 13 weeks, which began after age 14

Note: Where a child (who is not subject to a care order) returns to his parent, person with Parental Responsibility, for a period of 6 months or more they will lose their status as a Relevant child, however if this arrangement subsequently breaks down before their 18th birthday and the child ceases to live with the person concerned, the child is to be treated as a Relevant child.

### Former Relevant

A Former Relevant young person is:

- (a) aged 18 or above, and either
- (b) has been Relevant and would be one if under 18, or
- (c) immediately before ceasing to be looked after at age 18, was Eligible

Note: The status of Former Relevant applies until the young person reaches age 21 unless they are pursuing a course of higher education, when they are considered Former Relevant beyond age 21 for as long as they are pursuing that programme.

### Former Relevant young people pursuing further education or training

A young person will be considered to be Former Relevant if:

- (a) they are under 25,
- (b) they inform Rochdale that they now wish to pursue a programme of education or training

### Qualifying

A Qualifying young person is:

- (a) aged between 16 and 21 years old;
- (b) was subject to special guardianship having been looked after immediately prior to that special guardianship order being made,
- (c) was privately fostered,
- (d) is aged 16 or 17 and has been looked after for a period of less than 13 weeks, but is no longer looked after and has not returned home to parents/person with parental responsibility

## **3.2 Entitlements to Services**

The following entitlements are established through the Relevant Legislation and Regulations

Definitions Entitlements

### Eligible

Eligible young people aged 17 and 18 remain Looked After. Procedures and guidance regarding their care and support needs are predominantly addressed in the wider Looked After Children's procedures Relevant to Rochdale. These describe the framework of assessment, care planning, intervention and case review that must be followed to plan the support that 16 and 17 year old young people need to prepare for the time that they will not be looked after.

The statutory obligations are the same as with any other Looked After Child, including duty to maintain their care plan, carry out regular reviews of the case and appoint an Independent Reviewing Officer.

- additional duties for this group of Looked After Children are;
- to prepare an assessment of needs with a view to determining what **advice**, assistance and support are needed whilst the young person remains looked after, and after they cease to be looked after
- following the completion of the assessment of needs to prepare a Pathway Plan, which includes the child's care plan
- to keep the Pathway Plan under regular review
- to appoint a Personal Advisor for the child

### Relevant

Rochdale **is** only responsible for Relevant children who were last looked after by Rochdale.

Duties for this group of young people are;

- take reasonable steps to keep in touch
- prepare an assessment of need as above prepare a Pathway Plan as above keep the Pathway Plan under regular review as above
- appoint a Personal Advisor as above
- safeguard and promote the young **person's** welfare by maintaining them in suitable accommodation and providing assistance in order to meet their education, training or employment needs as set out in their Pathway Plan.

### Former Relevant

Rochdale **is** only responsible for Former Relevant children who were last looked after by Rochdale.

Duties for this group of young people are;

- take reasonable steps to keep in touch, or to re-establish contact if they lose touch
- continue to keep the Pathway Plan under regular review
- continue the appointment of a Personal Advisor if the child requires it, to provide financial assistance to support their employment, education and training needs
- to pay a higher education bursary if the young person pursues higher education, as agreed within their Pathway Plan.

### Former Relevant young people pursuing further education or training

Rochdale **is** only responsible for Former Relevant children who were last looked after by Rochdale.

Duties for this group of young people are;

- appoint a Personal Advisor

- carry out an assessment of need to determine what support and assistance is needed
- prepare a Pathway Plan based on the assessment of need,
- provide financial assistance to support the young person to assist them in furthering their university education.

### Qualifying

The Cared for Children's Team is responsible for providing advice, guidance and assistance to certain groups of young people who 'qualify' for leaving care support. Some 'Qualifying children' will be as vulnerable and have very similar needs to Eligible, Relevant or Former Relevant children.

Unlike Relevant and Former Relevant young people, whose responsible authority is that which looked after them, Qualifying young people have the right to ask for advice and assistance of any local authority.

Where a Qualifying young person has been previously looked after the local authority must assess their needs, in accordance with the National Assessment Framework, to establish whether they require advice and assistance. Where the assessment indicates that support will be necessary over a period of time they should draw up a plan with the young person outlining the support that may be required and the plan that follows might follow the same format as a Pathway Plan

Duties for this group of young people are:

- advise, assist and befriend
- provide financial assistance if required to those young people who are in full time further or higher education up to the age of 25, including;
- assistance to secure vacation accommodation where necessary

### Advocacy

All Looked After Children must be made aware of their entitlement to independent advocacy support. This is available through Children's Rights Service. This entitlement extends to care leavers wishing to make a complaint, and includes situations where young people need to make representations about the quality of the care and support provided by Rochdale.

It is essential to ensure that the views of young people are fully represented in the process of assessing and meeting their needs in the Pathway Plans. All looked after young people and care leavers should be advised of their right to an advocate to support them to express their wishes and feelings about the help they feel they will need for the future, so that they are enabled to reach their potential.

## **4 Monitoring and Reporting**

This offer will be monitored by the Cared for Children's Team within Children's Social Care.

Independent Reviewing Officers will monitor the implementation of the procedure and overarching Regulatory requirements through the Reviews of Eligible and Relevant

children's Care Plan's and Pathway Plans. The Cared for Children's Team manager will monitor the implementation of such through the Review of Former Relevant young people's Pathway Plans.

Reporting will be undertaken on a regular basis to the Head of Service, and in turn the Senior Management Team who monitor the performance and implementation of this procedure and the associated Regulations.

Services to Looked After Children and young people Leaving Care in Rochdale will regularly be considered by the Corporate Parenting Group, and associated sub groups at a strategic and operational level.

The offer will also be considered on an annual basis through the Council's standard Governance processes, as it is a Regulatory requirement to review the financial support available to young people leaving care each year.

## 5 Role of the Leaving Care Social Worker and Personal Advisor

A Social Worker is a statutory role within all Local Authorities, with key responsibilities provided through the relevant Legislation, Regulation and Guidance, within which all Social Workers must operate.

The Cared for Children's Team Social Worker will remain the Looked After Child's key Social Worker for Eligible and Relevant young people once they turn 16 years of age. The Cared for Children's Team Social Worker will undertake a Needs Assessment within 3 months of the young person's 16<sup>th</sup> Birthday, or three months after they become Looked After if this is after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday and ensure this is revisited where necessary as a young person's needs change.

The Leaving Care Social Worker is primarily responsible for developing the Pathway Plan with the young person, and for ensuring the implementation of this Pathway Plan.

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 requires the responsible Authority to arrange for each Eligible and Relevant young person to have a Personal Adviser who can continue to support the young person when their status becomes that of Former Relevant young person. The appointment of a Personal Adviser is a statutory requirement and must be different to the allocated Social Worker completing the Pathway Plan. This emphasizes the importance of the role and reflects the belief that young people leaving care should be able to identify someone as committed to their well-being and development on a long-term basis prior to their actually leaving care. At the age of 16 the Personal Adviser will be introduced.

As a general principle at 18 years, the Personal Adviser will become the young person's primary worker and the Social Work function will end.

Key functions of the Personal Adviser include:

- To provide advice (including practical advice) and support and to participate in the assessment, preparation and review of the young person's Pathway Plan
- To liaise with the responsible Authority in the implementation of the Pathway Plan

- To co-ordinate the provision of services and to take reasonable steps to ensure that the young person makes use of such services
- To keep informed about the young person's progress and wellbeing
- To keep **full, accurate and up to date** written records of contacts with the young person **and services provided**.
- To liaise with appropriate educational institutions (**e.g.** FE colleges, universities) and support (**e.g.** the Virtual Headteacher) as appropriate.

The Personal Advisor must have an understanding of the issues facing Looked After Children as they make their transition to adulthood. They also require a working knowledge of the legal framework affecting care leavers and relevant legislation concerned with housing and homelessness.

Young people in education will also be able to access a Positive Steps Personal Adviser from the age of 13.

The responsibility for pragmatic support for Eligible and Relevant children **aged** 16-18 lies firstly with the allocated Social Worker. This will enable the Social Worker to build a positive relationship with the young person initially. The Personal Advisor can gradually take on more and more support as the young person reaches adulthood post 18. This will allow a smooth transition and a consistent supportive adult in their life until reaching 21 or beyond.

## **5.1 Duties to Eligible, Relevant, Former Relevant and Qualifying Young People**

### (a) Eligible children

Eligible children aged 16 and 17 remain Looked After, and as such the Leaving Care Social Worker must carry out the key statutory functions on behalf of the Local Authority as with any other Looked After Child.

### (b) Relevant young people

Relevant children aged 16 and 17 will continue to have an allocated Social Worker, alongside a Personal Advisor who will continue to work with them beyond age 18. It is the duty of the Cared for Children's Team to ensure that they keep in touch with all Relevant young people.

For all Relevant young people monthly contact of some form is a requirement. This can be by any means (text, phone, email or letter). Direct contact is to be made at least every three months as a minimum.

Regular information should be sent regarding any training schemes or incentives that the young person may be eligible for.

Where Relevant young people are choosing not to engage with the Cared for Children's team on-going efforts must be made to contact them. Regular letters must be sent and records kept evidencing the support that is being offered to the young person.

In line with good practice personal visits should be undertaken to the young person's home address at least two times each year, perhaps to coincide with the provision of the Birthday Allowance or Festival Allowance.

(c) Former Relevant young people

It is the duty of the Cared for Children's Team to ensure that they keep in touch with all Former Relevant young people however, the Personal Advisor needs to take into account the wishes and feelings of the Former Relevant young person. Direct contact should still be made on a three monthly basis to offer practical and emotional support. Regular information should be sent regarding any training schemes or incentives that the young person may be eligible for.

Where Former Relevant young people are choosing not to engage with the Cared for Children's Team on-going efforts must be made to contact them. Regular letters must be sent and records kept evidencing the support that is being offered to the young person.

In line with good practice a minimum of two personal visits should be undertaken to the young person's home address, this would increase for those who require further support, perhaps to coincide with the provision of the Birthday Allowance or Festival Allowance.

(d) Qualifying young people

The Cared for Children's Team has a duty to ascertain the support needs of all Qualifying children and young people. Whilst it is recognized that this group of young people can be difficult to track the local authority does have a duty to them and it is essential that all efforts are made to fulfil this duty in the best interest of the Qualifying young person.

Qualifying children and young people will remain an open case to the Cared for Children's Team, and contact will be made every 6 months either by letter or telephone. This will be recorded within ICS as a case note.

It is important that the Looked After Children's Social Work Team and Children's Safeguarding Teams are conscious of this aspect of legislation when considering closing cases of children who return home after a period of being Looked After. It is necessary for all children who meet the above criteria and will be considered a Qualifying child remain an open case within the service so case responsibility can transfer to the Cared for Children's team on their 16th birthday.

Regular information should be sent to Qualifying children regarding any training schemes or incentives that they may be eligible for.

## 6 Needs Assessments

The Cared for Children's Team Social Worker will complete a Pathway Plan (Part 1) or Needs Assessment in respect of all Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant young people for whom they are responsible. The Needs Assessment must be undertaken by the Social Worker. This is a statutory duty supported by case law and cannot be allocated to a Personal Advisor to undertake.

The Needs Assessment should be commenced prior to the young person's 16th birthday, and in all cases the Needs Assessment and Pathway Plan must be completed within 3 months of the young person's 16th birthday, or within 3 months of their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday if they become looked after following this time.

The Social Worker is expected to undertake work over the next 3 months with the young person and their carers to gather the information required for the Needs Assessment. The information gathering process should not be rushed and the young person should be encouraged to share their views, wishes and feelings in relation to all sections of the assessment.

The young person should be asked where they want their assessment sessions to take place. Some young people may wish to take part in the assessment process within their placement/home. Others may wish for their assessment to take place in a different venue. Undertaking the assessment in a place where the young person feels most comfortable will most likely produce the best results.

Carers need to be involved in the assessment process in order that a more rounded view of the young person's strengths and needs can be obtained. The young person may wish for other relatives/extended family or other significant people to be involved in their Needs Assessment – this is the young person's choice and these wishes and feelings should be respected. It should also be the choice of the young person whether other agencies such as Health or Positive Steps should be involved in the Needs Assessment.

When writing up the Needs Assessment and consequent Pathway Plan the Cared for Children's Team Social Worker will ensure they identify the young person's strengths in addition to their needs.

The completed Needs Assessment should be shared with the young person and they should be given opportunity to share their own views in response to this.

All needs assessments will be monitored within the Quality Assurance Framework to ensure best practice.

## **7 Vision & Strategy**

This strategy is based on the principles of good corporate parenting and will concentrate on the following areas:

- Education
- Employment
- Financial support
- Health
- Housing
- Justice System
- On-going support

## 8 Education

A good standard of education is a key driver towards achieving positive employment outcomes in adulthood. However, there remains a significant gap between the educational achievements of care leavers and their peers.

Care leavers are less likely to have achieved 5 A\*-C GCSEs (national figures indicate 37% of looked after children compared to 80% of non-looked after children in 2012). Only 6% of care leavers go into higher education compared to 23% of their peers at aged 18.

A big priority for Rochdale MBC is, therefore, to ensure that children in care and care leavers get the support they need from schools, colleges, universities and local authorities to maximise their educational attainment and employment opportunities

### What we have done:

- All young people at Key Stage 4 will undertake two PEP meetings within year 11 to ensure that the support required is in place to achieve the best outcome for CLA school leavers.
- Support young people who wish to go onto Higher Education with a financial incentive.
- Financially support young people who wish to go onto university.
- Provide a laptop and internet ability to all the young people who are CLA

### What we will do:

- Develop and implement post-secondary school PEP for 16-18 year olds.
- Implement a daily allowance to encourage young people into education and training.
- Liaise with Further Education and Higher Education Institutes' and ensure that a key person within their organisation has an oversight of care leavers and they are aware of the Buttle UK Quality Mark.
- Ensure guaranteed input from Positive Steps Advisers at year 11 PEPs.
- Raise awareness and aspirations of all key Corporate Parent players regarding the opportunities and possibilities of our Care Leavers going onto HE and university.

### Impact of Measures:

- Local authorities, through their financial support and policies, encouraging and supporting all care leavers to remain engaged in education, take up training opportunities and undertake activities aimed at improving employability;
- Care leavers experience improved access to further and higher education as well as better support whilst at a further education college or university.

## 9 Employment

The Social Justice Strategy, Social Justice: Transforming Lives, sets out the importance of work not just as the best route out of poverty, but as a means of delivering positive change for individuals and for whole communities. The benefits of work are far wider than just remunerative and we know work provides structure, a sense of purpose, progress, achievement, self-confidence and personal responsibility.

Too many care leavers are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or are long term unemployed. There are currently significant challenges for many young people taking their first steps into the world of work. However, some local authorities and charitable organisations – working independently and with Jobcentre Plus - have

nonetheless increased the number of care leavers they have supported into employment, education and training through focused action and support.

Rochdale MBC is determined to maximise employment opportunities for all care leavers by learning from this good practice and being vigorous about building on our responsibilities as corporate parents.

What we have done:

- Actively work with young people and local training providers such as RCT, Rathbones and Positive Steps.
- Provide financial support for young people for interviews.
- Provide bus pass to assist young people getting to work.

What we will do:

- Develop a range of employment opportunities across Rochdale MBC for Care Leavers
- Introduce a job club at Fashion Corner in partnership with Positive Steps and Job Centre Plus.
- Establish good links with local employers and provide a 'traineeship' linked to a recognised qualification.
- Introduce a daily personal allowance to encourage young people into education/employment.
- Identify a key person within Positive Steps and Job Centre Plus who has key responsibility for CLA children.

Impact of Measures:

- A further reduction in the number of care leavers who are NEET, through improved support by mainstream and specialist services.
- Improved understanding of how effective Jobcentre Plus support is in driving care leaver employment outcomes and identifying areas for further improvements in service delivery.

## **10 Financial Assistance**

When you do not have the support of family to fall back on, particularly when having to meet the challenge of independent living at a much younger age than your peers, having access to timely financial help is crucial.

Care leavers often find it difficult to navigate services and work out what financial support they are entitled to.

Rochdale MBC is committed to ensuring that care leavers are adequately supported financially in their transition from care to adulthood to enable young people leaving care to have the same opportunities to fulfil their potential as their peers.

What we have done:

- Provide a personal allowance equivalent to DWP benefit rates to young people living independently.
- Setting up home allowance provided, £2,000 to assist with goods/soft furnishing to set up home.

- Financially assist young people attending university with regards to accommodation.
- £2000 non-repayable bursary for those attending university.
- Festival allowance
- Birthday allowance
- Support with educational materials
- Prom outfit/transport allowance
- Finances provided to promote family contact

What we will do:

- Staying Put Policy to allow young people to remain in foster care post 18.
- Revisiting financial policy in respect of young people going to university.

Impact of Measures:

- Care leavers receiving financial support and guidance from their local authority and benefits agency, so that they are able to manage their income and reduce the risks of falling into debt;
- An increase in care leavers attending further and higher education.

## 11 Health

Children often enter the care system with a poorer level of physical and mental health than their peers, and their longer-term outcomes remain worse. Two thirds of looked after children have at least one physical health complaint, and nearly half have a mental health disorder. Care leavers frequently tell us that they encounter a lack of support in accessing appropriate services. They often feel that the professionals working close to them do not have an understanding of their needs, particularly in respect of mental health. Care leavers also face difficulties around the transition from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to adult services.

What we have done:

- The health needs of care leavers are assessed, prioritised and met.
- CLA Nurse conducts annual health assessments; this will also capture dental appointments.
- CAMHS consultation clinics offered weekly.

What we will do:

- We will ensure care leavers are able to continue to obtain health advice and services in accordance with statutory guidance *on Promoting the Health and Well-being of Looked After Children*.
- Improve the number of young people engaging with medical assessments and dental check-ups by providing support and incentives for those reluctant to engage.
- Provide young people with substance misuse services.
- We will ensure that care leavers have access to and understand their full health history.

Impact of Measures:

- Care leavers have timely access to mainstream and specialist health services, which meet their physical and mental health needs.

## 12 Housing

Care leavers are a vulnerable group of young adults who have particular needs in relation to housing and homelessness. The majority of care leavers leave care by the age of 18 and rising demands on social housing and other accommodation is making it increasingly difficult for young people to find suitable accommodation as they enter adulthood.

89% of care leavers live in suitable accommodation at aged 19. Rochdale MBC is adopting “staying put” arrangements to ensure that care leavers can continue to live with and get support from their former foster carers.

What we have done:

- We have 12 trainer flats and 1 ‘taster’ flat in use to help young people prepare for independence
- We have adopted the ‘Staying Put’ policy to enable young people to remain in stable foster placements where applicable.
- Provided ‘supported lodgings’ accommodation by commissioning CANW to provide this
- Worked locally with various organisations such as Barnardo’s, Shelter, Stepping Stones and DePaul Trust to provide suitable accommodation for young people leaving care with a range of individual needs.

What we will do:

- Implement and advertise the ‘Staying Put’ policy to enable more looked after young people can remain in stable supportive placements.
- Ensure care leavers are included in the Borough’s Homelessness strategy by working in partnership with Rochdale Boroughwide Housing and Rochdale MBC Homelessness department.
- Improve the range of ‘supported lodgings’ availability within the Borough.

Impact of Measures:

- Care leavers live in safe and suitable accommodation that meets their individual needs.
- Programmes to reduce homelessness address the specific needs of care leavers.

## **13 Justice System**

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and Home Office (HO) recognise that young adults who have been in care can be particularly vulnerable as they transition into adulthood, particularly if they are in the criminal justice system. They are also a particularly vulnerable group that are at risk of being drawn into crime. Equally we know that care leavers can be particularly vulnerable to becoming a victim of crime, including in some cases falling victim to grooming and exploitation online or offline.

What we have done:

- All CLA young people in the criminal justice system have an allocated YOT worker.
- All young people in custody are provided with resettlement support.
- Child Sexual Exploitation strategy has been implemented.

What we will do:

- Ensure young people in custody receive resettlement support on release.

- Child Sexual Exploitation issues will be addressed by ensuring all young people have a CSE screening tool completed and relevant support provided to reduce risk.

Impact of Measures:

- Programmes to reduce crime and the risk of young people being exploited specifically address the needs of care leavers.
- Reduce the risk of care leavers entering the criminal justice system
- Reduce the risk of care leavers re-offending

## **14 Ongoing Support**

Care leavers require support and guidance before and after they turn 18. Care leavers, unlike their peers, may not have networks of support outside of their local authority. We know that young people leaving care frequently feel isolated, lonely and lacking the safety net of someone to talk to and to advise them in a crisis.

What we have done:

- Provided personal advisors up until the age of 21 (25 if in full time Higher Education)
- Open door policy for previously CLA children for advice and guidance.

What we will do:

- Set up a leaving care website to provide information and support to young people preparing to leave care and who live independently.
- Allocation of personal advisors from the age of 16 to provide a consistent service to young people preparing to leave care.

Impact of Measures:

- Care leavers receive high quality on-going support from Rochdale MBC so that they do not feel lonely and isolated;
- Care leavers leave care at a time when they are ready.

## **Summary/Conclusion**

There are clear challenges and opportunities for Rochdale MBC in developing and improving services to meet the needs of young people leaving care.

These have been identified and actions are in place to address them.

Recent restructures in Children's Services have prioritised looked after young people and the service they receive when leaving care. This includes the allocation of a social worker when they first become looked after and a personal advisor at 16 years of age.

Rochdale MBC has made a commitment to developing employment opportunities through creating apprenticeship posts across council services which will be ring-fenced for care leavers.

Accommodation is a priority and important in ensuring care leavers make the transition from care to adulthood successfully.

Children's Social Care will continue to work closely with Rochdale Boroughwide Housing to maintain and develop the trainer flats for young people and will continue to work closely with partners to ensure access to safe and appropriate accommodation.

The 'Staying Put' policy will be implemented to reduce the risk of care leavers having to leave stable and secure foster placements and enable foster carers to change status and continue to support young people into adulthood.

Children's Social Care, with the assistance of the designated nurse, will ensure that all care leavers have access to their health records, are registered with a GP and with a dentist.

**END OF DOCUMENT**