

Support Policy for Young People Leaving Care.

2020/21



DRAFT

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1. **“Care”** by CF, a Kirklees Care Leaver

Care is a strong word.

Care means everything.

Care is about being able to help.

Care is about being able to support.

Care is about being able to love people for who they are.

Care for people you love; it's important.

Care is important.

Care is for everyone, no one deserves not to be cared for.

Care is not overrated, it's the law.

Care is about love.

Care is about paying attention.

Care is about trust.

Care is about kindness.

Care is about showing children they have a future.

Care is a responsibility.

Being in care is frightening.

Being in care is upsetting.

Being in care is losing family.

Being in care is losing friends.

Being in care is shedding tears.

Being in care is bottling up feelings.

Being in care is about not feeling wanted.

Being in care is about not feeling loved.

Being in care is about feeling guilt.

Being in care is being unloved.

Being in care is mentally straining.

Being in care is crying in an empty room.

Being in care is being broken but smiling through it.

Being in care is feeling like you're screaming for help but no one listens.

Being in care is thinking about is this worth me living.

1.1 Introduction and purpose.

First and foremost, Kirklees Children's Services would like to extend its thanks to our young person for giving permission to share their creative writing about "Care".

As Corporate Parents, Kirklees Council is committed to supporting our care experienced young people to have not only the best start in life as a child but also to have the best start as they prepare for life as adults.

We want our young people to have ambition and aspirations, to have the same opportunities to achieve their goals, reach their full potential, and enjoy leisure and cultural activities as any other child would.

We need to be Corporate Parents who understand achieving these outcomes means for some young people, we will need to do more or do things differently to the minimum that is set down in the rules. We aim to make a conscious shift away from restrictive 'rule book' parenting to an approach that is highly tailored to individual's needs with support wrapped around as required.

In 2018 the Government launched the Care Leaver Covenant – a pledge to help people leaving care to become independent. It was said at the time: "We are the parents for these children and young people and the way to think about that is, what would I want for my child?"

In the context of this policy and guidance, it would be easy to lose focus on how vulnerable and traumatised many of care experienced young people are and concentrate instead on the financial cost to our authority.

The simple truth is we need to do more to support young people leaving care; more to nurture ambition and more to prevent these young people from experiencing poverty.

Young people leaving care need to move towards independence at a pace that is right for them not a set point in time. We know care leavers can face considerable disadvantages and barriers to achievement and stability as they leave care and move into adulthood. Young people in care are more likely to move out into the adult world earlier, often without the same level of ongoing family support their peers are afforded. This can mean they have fewer life chances and as a result experience poorer outcomes, but it doesn't have to be this way.

Leaving home can be many things, exciting – stepping out into the world, having independence, and making your own decisions, going to University or getting your own place to live. For some young people it might be a time of worry and anxiety– wondering how you'll cope on your own and manage your own money.

Working with our care leavers and partners in Kirklees, we will support our young people to develop the skills, resilience, and confidence they need to prepare them for a successful transition into adult life as any good parent would. It is important that we ensure young people leaving care receive the right level of practical, emotional, and financial support.

To do this well, we recognise the need for a flexible financial support policy which meets legislative requirements but can be used innovatively to meet the needs of our young people leaving care, reflecting our outstanding ambitions for care leavers.

This policy draws down the offer from all service areas across Kirklees Council in a true collaborative approach to Corporate Parenting to provide collective support to young people leaving care.

This policy sets out what services and support should be provided to young people aged between 16 and 25 who have left care. It sets out the role of Personal Advisors (PA's) and the Looked After Children and Leaving Care Service and the standards of service provision that should be available to all Kirklees care leavers.

2. Principles and Objectives of service

- The voice of young people leaving care will be at the heart of all planning and decision making for their future. The wellbeing and aspirations of young people will be the central consideration of the Care Leavers Service to ensure decisions are made in the best interest of each young person.
- The Care Leavers Service will be a caring and supportive parent. Every care leaver will have a dedicated personal advisor to provide support and to enable access to services based on high quality assessment and planning to help them achieve good outcomes and improved life chances.
- Support will be personalised for each care leaver based on their assessed needs and their aspirations for the future. Personal advisors are encouraged to be creative and innovative to create individually tailored plans for care leavers.
- The Care Leavers Service will work with our collective Corporate Parents and the wider partnership, to ensure appropriate accommodation, resources and services are available to support successful transitions and meet the assessed needs of care leavers.
- The Care Leavers Service recognises that whilst care leavers may face challenges during the transition to adulthood, they are no different to our own children. They may need or wish to change direction and goals numerous times to find a path to a successful future that is right for them. The Care Leavers Service will act as any good parent would and support these aspirations and ambitions through quality pathway planning which provides for such contingencies, ensuring plans are flexible.

3 How we decide what support Care Leavers can receive.

3.1 The Legal Framework.

There are laws which set out how Kirklees Council (and every other council) must support young people leaving care.

The Children Leaving Care Act 2000 created four categories of Care Leavers who are entitled to support after their sixteenth birthday. Kirklees Council's financial responsibility for Care Leavers will be determined according to these categories.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced a new duty on Local Authorities to provide Personal Advisors and support to all Former Relevant Care Leavers up to age 25 if they want this support.

The policy has been developed in line with:

- I. The Children Act 1989
- II. The Children Leaving Care Act 2000
- III. The Children Act 2004
- IV. Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers
- V. Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010
- VI. The Children and Social Work Act 2017
- VII. Our Council Plan 2020/21
- VIII. Kirklees Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy 2019/2021
- IX. Kirklees Children and Young Peoples Plan

A detailed description of the different types of eligibility is provided in appendix 1.

The table below summarises eligibility for services and describes the services that should be provided as a minimum.

Explanation of Status	As a minimum, we will ensure these young people
Eligible young person (young people aged 16 or 17 who have been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and were looked after on their 16 th birthday and who are still looked after by Kirklees)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive all the care and support they would normally until they leave care. • Have a Personal Advisor • Have a needs assessment. • Have a pathway plan and review. • Have access to our Commitment to Care Leavers
Relevant young person (young people aged under 18 who were previously an Eligible child and are no longer Looked After.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a Personal Advisor • Have a needs assessment. • Have a pathway plan and review. • Receive help to find both a good place to live (suitable accommodation) and financial support to pay for this. • Receive a maintenance allowance. • Receive encouragement and support to achieve their goals as set out in their pathway plan. • Have access to Keep in Touch. • Receive financial support to meet education, employment, and training needs. • Have access to our Commitment to Care Leavers
Former relevant young person (young person aged 18-25 who have been Eligible or Relevant young people)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a Personal Advisor • Have a needs assessment. • Have a pathway plan and review. • Receive help to find a good place to live (suitable accommodation) • Receive encouragement and support to achieve their goals as set out in their pathway plan.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive encouragement and support to access education, employment, and training. • Receive help with some living costs. • Have access to our Commitment to Care Leavers
Qualifying young person (any young person aged between 16 – 25 who has left care but who was in care on or after their 16 th birthday and had spent less than 13 weeks in care since the age of 14, in other words not an Eligible or Relevant young person)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have access to our Commitment to Care Leavers • Receive encouragement, advice, and support. • Receive a maintenance allowance if they are taking part in education or training and not in receipt of Universal Credit,

3.2 Personal Advisors.

“Behind every child who believes in himself is a parent who believed first”

Matthew L Jacobson.

When the time comes for young people to leave our care, they are entitled to a range of services which are to help them plan their future and achieve their aspirations. This preparation to leave care starts with the Care Leavers Service when young people turn 16, they are allocated a personal advisor and the support they receive can be in place until they turn 25.

Personal Advisors (PA's) provide the care, advice and encouragement young people need to have the foundations for success in place to help them go on to achieve their full potential.

We have a duty to ensure all Eligible, Relevant, and Former Relevant children are provided with a personal advisor.

PA's are the people that work the closest with young people as they prepare to move into adulthood, hearing their hopes and dreams for the future and working together with the young person they will develop a plan which sets out how they might achieve their goals. Most importantly, PA's will be the people a young person knows believes in them and they can turn to if things get tough.

For eligible young people (children who are still looked after by the council) their PA will be their allocated social worker.

For relevant and former relevant young people, the Care Leavers Service will look at the interests and culture of young people and try to match them with a PA that shares similar beliefs and interests.

The support PA's will provide will be wide ranging and will very much be dependent on the needs of each individual young person. PA's will lever all relevant resources available across the Kirklees partnership to ensure young people and Care Leavers have access to:

- Information and support to develop the practical skills needed to begin an adult life, promoting the help that can be found at our dedicated Care Leavers services No.11 & No 12
- Information and support to access education, training, and employment opportunities and to access any incentive funding or bursaries there may be.

- Support in finding and sustaining employment.
- Information and practical support to manage their money, including help with budgeting, setting up bank and saving accounts, setting up direct debits, using banking apps, debt advice.
- Information and advice about the housing and accommodation options potentially available and support to secure accommodation
- Support and encouragement to develop their confidence and make good decisions.
- Support with navigating the benefit system and applying for benefits if required.
- General information about maintaining positive health and wellbeing; knowledge about how to access targeted and specialist health services.
- Information about leisure, sporting, and cultural opportunities to enable care leavers to enjoy and participate in community life.

3.3 Pathway Plans.

"Help me get 'somewhere', not 'nowhere'" Kirklees Care Leaver

Pathway plans need to be a meaningful roadmap to a young person's future, something which capture not just practicalities needed to live well and cope in the adult world, but also hopes and ambitions and how a young person might realise these goals. As well as looking to the future, to help young people make sense of their life, good plans should incorporate elements of life story work so that they have a permanent record of their care experiences and have an understanding as to why they were looked after.

Plans need to be produced with the young person and in collaboration with others who have a role in their lives such as the virtual school, parents, current carers, teacher or tutor, nurse, reviewing officer and any advocate. Every Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant young person should have their financial needs assessed and included in their Pathway Plans.

Pathway planning for care leavers should reflect their growing independence as they take on more responsibility for their lives.

All care leavers must have a pathway plan in place that is based on an assessment of their needs. Pathway plans should have a contingency plan in place and be flexible enough to allow for changes in direction, our own children often regularly change their minds about what they want to study or do for a career, young people leaving care should be afforded the same support and encouragement to find a direction that is right for them as we would our own children.

The views of young people must be at the heart of all pathway planning, and they should be encouraged to participate as far as possible. PA's should keep young people informed of the outcomes of assessments and reviews and ensure they are provided with copies of key documents.

PA's will ensure Pathway Plans are kept up to date in line with young people's needs. There is an expectation PA's will meet with young people as a minimum every two months.

It is essential that pathway planning ensures care leavers are in receipt of mainstream and universal services, benefits where applicable and have suitable accommodation.

PA's have a duty to co-ordinate the provision of services for care leavers from a number of agencies, so it is vital that the professional network is engaged and co-produces the pathway process.

Pathway planning should end in a planned manner as the young person nears their 21st birthday unless the young person wishes to continue to receive support. In these cases, young people can continue to receive support up to the age of 25. There is no longer a requirement for young people to be engaged in a planned programme of education or training to continue to receive support past the age of 21. During this period, planning should focus on transitions to relevant adult resources as required by the young person's assessed needs.

3.4 Process for agreeing Financial Support.

Financial support should be agreed and recorded as part of each young person's pathway plan.

Young people's needs regarding financial support should be assessed within the pathway needs assessment along with areas of support, amounts to be paid and the frequency of payments to be made.

Many payments made by the Care Leaver Service are discretionary and the amount paid will be dependent on each young person's need.

Whilst the Care Leavers Service needs to be mindful of budgetary constraints and the financial envelope we have to work in, it is important young people are not excluded from accessing things their non-care experienced peers are able to.

Payments to young people as far as practicable should be made in accordance with this guidance and with the approval of the Care Leavers Service.

Payments to, or on behalf of, any 'young person must be on the Financial Authorisation Form and approved by a Team Leader and/or Team Manager.

All spend must be recorded on Liquid Logic and a log should be created and held on Wisdom against each young person's file.

Financial support needs to be reviewed every 6 months at the pathway plan review, but care leavers can ask their social worker or personal advisor to review their support needs earlier where their circumstances have changed or where they are having difficulty in managing their finances.

3.5 Payments

Having a bank account and the ability to make electronic and contactless payments are a basic necessity in today's world.

PA's will work with young people ensuring there is an early emphasis on supporting young people to open bank and savings accounts to develop their money management skills and promote saving for later life.

All young people and care leavers should be supported to open an account which best meets their needs. Care leavers will be expected to have a bank account as payment of all allowances and grants will be made directly into this bank account unless there are ongoing concerns about the care leaver's ability to manage their money.

Care Leavers should be supported to look at the digital offer from banks and the financial sector, all of which have apps which can help young people manage their money.

For those care leavers who are unable to access mainstream banking services alternate methods of payments are in place, currently this could be cash payments or payments to carers or residential homes. Moving forward we aim to introduce pre-loaded payment cards.

For those individuals about whom concerns exist, the social worker or personal advisor may agree with the care leaver to release small amounts of allowances to them at more regular intervals while they develop the skills to budget more effectively.

Social workers and PA's should regularly assess how the care leaver is managing their money and whether they need extra support in learning how to budget.

In a crisis or other emergency where a care leaver makes a request for emergency funds, the social worker or personal advisor must carry out an assessment to look into the circumstances of the request before agreeing any support.

Requests for emergency payment may also be indicative of other issues, for example substance misuse or debt, and this should be explored during the assessment. Wherever possible, emergency assistance should be given in forms other than cash, for example, this might be food parcels, utility top ups, and travel passes.

If planned payments are to be stopped for any reason e.g., removing incentives because a young person is no longer engaged in employment, education, or training as per their pathway plan, this must be discussed with the social worker or personal advisor's line manager. The social worker or personal advisor should write to the care leaver to explain the reasons for this.

4 Living Independently

We want our young people to live their lives confidently, independently and with dignity. We want them to feel included and connected to the communities they live in and be encouraged to contribute to making the places where they live safe and welcoming places.

What “getting somewhere” looks like will be different for each young person, so, we will make sure every care leaver has the right advice, and financial and emotional support at the right time.

Pathway planning needs to be central to young people’s journey to independence. It will be aspirational as well as practical, capturing and planning for where young people see themselves in 5, 10 years’ time, this might include owning their own home or car.

The financial support guidance below outlines what is available and is intended to incentivise work, training, and education.

We know PA’s work alongside their young people and understand them well. With this in mind PA’s are encouraged not to see this as a rigid framework, and to be innovative and creative when it comes to providing financial support, so we meet aspirations as well as need and ensuring no young person is financially worse off by taking up work training or education.

4.1 Income Maintenance.

The council will make sure young people have enough money to live off. A maintenance allowance will be paid to cover the costs of day to day living, including food, toiletries, utility bills, general travel, social life and leisure activities.

Income Maintenance is a payment which is in line with Universal Credit rates. Up to date information on standard monthly allowances can be found [here](#)

The current allowance equates to £79.38 (includes temporary 12 month Covid 19 increase) per week.

Should the temporary 12 month Covid 19 increase end as planned on the 6th of October 2021. The amount of Income Maintenance will reduce in line with Universal Credit rates to £59.38 per week.

This allowance may be paid to young people up to the age of 18 living independently. This allowance will continue to be paid regardless of any other income the young person has, such as a Further Education grant, training allowance or wages from employment.

This is the absolute minimum amount a young person should be expected to live on, and additional financial support should be provided with any needs identified by the pathway planning process. In general, Young People should be encouraged to engage in activities that increase their weekly income through incentives and bonuses.

Income maintenance cannot not be paid if a young person is in receipt of Universal Credit.

4.2 Who can receive Income Maintenance allowance?

Eligible young people.

As Eligible young people are still looked after, their financial support needs should continue to be met in the same way as other looked after children via

the Care Planning process. There is no duty within the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 to meet the maintenance needs of these young people.

Some Eligible young people may be entitled to claim non-means tested benefits such as Personal Independence Payments

Relevant Young People

The council has a duty to ensure that the income, maintenance, and accommodation costs of 'relevant' young people are adequately covered.

These young people are no longer entitled to claim means tested benefits such as Universal Credit. Responsibility for this financial support now lies with the Care Leavers Service

Important exceptions to this rule are lone parents or young people with long term health problems, or with disabilities. Relevant young people can claim non-means tested benefits e.g., PIPS Personal Independence Payment as appropriate.

If relevant young people are in employment, then their earnings will be taken into consideration when determining their entitlement. For relevant young people in full time or part time education, any part time earnings will be disregarded, dependant on their level of earnings.

Where a young person is entitled to weekly Maintenance Allowance, details should be recorded in their Pathway Plan.

Former Relevant and Qualifying Young People

The Care Leavers Service does not have a duty to provide income maintenance for these young people. However, in recognition of the challenges they face and the possible lack of familial support, wherever possible we should offer support and encouragement to access work, training or education.

Where there is no other source of income, young people should be supported to claim the appropriate benefit.

Former relevant young people who are in full time further education are normally entitled to claim Income Support/Universal Credit to meet their weekly living costs up to the age of 25. However, if a former relevant young person is not entitled to Universal Credit, income maintenance may be paid following an assessment of circumstance/need.

Similarly, Qualifying young people, who are engaged in education or training and not in receipt of Universal Credit, may also receive Income Maintenance following an assessment of circumstances and need.

Former relevant and qualifying young people in employment will normally be responsible for meeting their own needs in terms of living costs, if these young people are on a low wage, they may be entitled to some welfare benefits but assistance may still be considered based upon assessed need through the Young Persons Pathway Plan.

Young People in Custody

If a young person is on remand or serving a custodial sentence they will be fully maintained within the institution and so will not be entitled to income maintenance from Care Leavers Service.

We wish to support young people to maintain contact with family and friends whilst in custody and will pay a monthly allowance of £20 to support telephone contact for eligible and relevant young people.

Young people in custody may have the opportunity to earn pocket money/weekly allowance whilst in custody. Requests for exceptional payments for items such as clothing and educational equipment will be considered in line with current procedures for other young people who are leaving care and will be based on need.

Payments should be made online to young people's custodial accounts via the Money to Prisoner (MTP) portal. Payments by bank transfer and pre-paid card are not accepted. Where senders are unable to use the MTP portal they can apply to the Governor for permission for cash, postal orders, or cheques to be credited to a prisoner's account,

Former Relevant young people will generally not be entitled to an allowance, however at a Team Managers discretion, can receive up to £75 per year.

'Eligible', 'Relevant' and 'Former Relevant' young people who have been granted financial support whilst serving a custodial sentence may, upon release, apply for a clothing grant. This should only be paid in exceptional circumstances upon the discretion of a Team Manager.

'Qualifying' young people are not eligible for payments of any kind whilst serving custodial sentences.

Unaccompanied Asylum-seeking Children and Young People

The provisions introduced by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 apply to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in the same way as other children in this country. They will, however, have an immigration status (applying for asylum, acceptance as a refugee, granted exceptional leave to remain, or refused to leave to remain), that will need to be taken into account when considering provision of services.

Unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) who are looked after will be entitled to all the allowances for Looked After Children with the exception of payments for passports and support towards the cost of learning to drive.

Children and young people who are accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 will accrue entitlements to the provisions of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 in the normal way. In some circumstances young people who receive a service via Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 will also be entitled to the full provisions of the Children (Leaving Care Act) 2000. This will apply where young people have been "de facto" looked after (as per the 'Hillingdon Judgement' 2004). The decision about individual's entitlements to leaving care provision should be made by the relevant Leaving Care Team Manager based on a clear assessment of the circumstances.

‘Former Relevant’ young people who were unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

Young people who have received a decision regarding their immigration status and are allowed to remain for a minimum of 5 years will be entitled to the same support as all other ‘Former Relevant’ young people.

Young people who have exhausted all appeal rights are not entitled to leaving care funding except to avoid a breach of their human rights.

If a Young person has no recourse to any other funding, and if the Care Leavers Service provide support then this will usually be to cover housing costs and income maintenance only. They will not be entitled to any other financial support.

4.3 Support whilst waiting for benefits to be processed.

Debt and poverty seriously impact on life chances, tackling poverty and closing inequality gaps is a key priority for both the council and the Children and Young People’s Partnership. Wherever we can, we must do all we can to reduce the likelihood of a young person falling into debt.

When young people make their first claim for Universal Credit, there is usually a 4 week delay until they receive their payments. During this waiting period, we will ensure income maintenance is paid.

If there is a further delay beyond the 4 weeks, we will look at the young person’s circumstances and assess what support can be offered in kind by way of food parcels and/or another period of income maintenance.

To receive this support whilst benefits are being processed, young people will be required to attend all appointments and respond to any asks in relation to progressing their claim. PA’s should ensure young people understand what they need to do and provide any support needed. In addition, they need to make a commitment not to apply for a Universal Credit Advanced Payment (it should be explained this is because advanced payments have to be paid back and will be taken out of their benefits once they are processed, this could mean they find they struggle to have enough money to live on, pay bills etc.)

The benefit system can be complicated and daunting. We will ensure all young people receive support to navigate the system, this will look different for each individual, it could be help completing online forms and reading communications from the DWP, access to somewhere with computers and Wi-Fi or attending appointments with them.

4.4 Top up payments

We are committed to the principle that no young person should find themselves financially worse off when undertaking education, employment, or training to improve their life chances than they would if they were on benefits.

We will ensure that all our care leavers who are attending full time education or equivalent have a minimum of £105 disposable income after rent costs. This includes income from Universal Credit or similar source and bursary monies (in cash or kind).

The Care Leavers Service will support the young person to ensure they have claimed all the benefits and bursaries they are entitled to. If the amount falls short of the minimum amount, the Care Leavers Service will top up the remainder. For example, if a Young Person receives £79.09 in Universal Credit and a £25 bursary, the Care Leavers Service will provide a Top Up of £15.91 weekly.

An additional £15 per week will be paid to young people where they are responsible for their food and utilities.

Bursary payments are a term time only payment. During holiday periods when the bursary element is not payable by schools and colleges, the Care Leavers Service will not pay the bursary, but will make sure tops ups are made where necessary to the minimum disposable income amount.

To summarise, we will ensure all young people in full time education, employment or training have a minimum of £105 per week to live off.

4.5 Support to find a home.

We will support care leavers to find a home that is right for them that they can manage, afford, and most importantly feel proud of if moving on to their own place.

There are a number of housing and accommodation options to explore with young people as they prepare to leave care. Safety and affordability will be key considerations alongside independent living skills and emotional resilience to live alone, but other areas such as distance and costs to travel to work, and education settings and being able to maintain familiar relationships, friendships and support networks also need to be taken into account.

Joining the housing ladder may seem a distant goal for many care leavers, however this should still be explored and encouraged along with other alternatives such as shared ownership and self-build.

Ultimately, if a young person doesn't feel a sense of belonging, connection, or desire to be part of the community where they live, the likelihood of putting down roots and having a stable life are low.

We will help young people up to the age of 25 to find housing. PA's will provide support to young people and care leavers to set up their homes and visit to check they are coping or just for a chat if that's what a young person wants.

These are some of the types of housing and accommodation that PA's should explore with young people.

- Council Tenancy – In Kirklees, Care Leavers are entitled to Band A (the highest band) in the Choice Based Letting system – Choose n Move. Care Leavers will need to 'bid' (register an interest) on properties they are interested in. Young people will need access to the internet to do this as the process is on-line. It should be noted that a single person will only be entitled to a 1 bedroomed property. The majority of these in Kirklees are Flats or Maisonettes.

- Staying Put – Where a care leaver remains living with their foster family up to the age of 21.
- Supported accommodation/semi-independent living – Care Leavers have their own accommodation but there are staff on hand for help and support.
- Supported Lodgings – Care Leavers rent a room in the home of a family; this is similar to Staying Put but means the young person is a lodger in the home.
- Trainer Flats – Care Leavers get the opportunity to practice independent living with support on hand if it's needed.
- Shared accommodation – Usually 1 bedroomed self-contained flat in a house.
- Private accommodation – a property owned by a private landlord.
- Housing association property – Similar to a Council tenancy.
- Accommodation during holiday periods if the Care Leaver is at University. Some but not all Universities offer 52 weeks accommodation for Care Leavers. PA's will work with Care Leavers going to University to ensure they have accommodation during holidays and breaks.
- Shared Lives Accommodation – If a young person needs additional support with independent living as an adult, Shared Lives provides trained carers who offer support and help in different ways to support independent living.

4.6 Rent, Housing Costs and Utility bills

No one likes having to pay bills, but unfortunately, this is part of growing up and being independent. Young people will be expected to pay for utility bills from any Leaving Care (maintenance) Allowance and/or wage received.

Where a young person's utility bills are paid by the Care Leavers Service as part of accommodation costs (e.g., in supported lodgings placements) then dependant on cost, the cost of the utility bills or a contribution towards the cost will be deducted from the Leaving Care Allowance received by the young person.

Young people with a net income over £120 per week will be expected to contribute to their rent, based on the table of contributions in Appendix 2.

As part of developing money management and life skills, it is advisable that PA's help young people set up Direct Debits for their essential bills and outgoings. Many banks offer accounts and applications which section off money for Direct Debits into a separate 'pot' from the main account when

income such as benefits or wages are paid in. Accounts like these help ensure bills are paid and easily show what money is left to 'live' on.

As part of the Council wide commitment to reducing poverty – especially fuel poverty, PA's and the Care Leaver service should support young people and care leavers to find the best utility deals on the market. Pre-payment or token meters whilst helpful in preventing people using more than they can pay for are significantly more expensive than other tariffs.

If accommodation isn't adequately heated and ventilated, it can lead to problems with mould and damp which could impact on young people's physical health and wellbeing. All these things need to be discussed with young people as they prepare to move towards independence.

Eligible and Relevant Young People

Due to the changes in the law, 16 and 17 year olds can no longer claim benefits, therefore up to the age of 18, we will pay full rent costs based on assessed need across a range of independent, supported and unsupported accommodation.

Former Relevant and Qualifying Young People

Beyond the age of 18, unless in Further or Higher Education, rent and accommodation costs become responsibility of the Care leaver, this could be via income or the Housing Benefit element of Universal Credit. Where required, we will support Care Leavers to claim the benefits they are entitled to.

- 4.7 Bonds, Advanced Rent Payments and Discretionary Housing Payments
Based on assessed need and outlined in the Pathway Plan, the council will fund **one** rent deposit (4 weeks rent in advance) / bond / accommodation administrative fees for an Eligible, Relevant or Former Relevant young person.

The sum paid for administrative fees is not a set rate as this will vary dependent on the provider or Landlord.

Where a young person wishes to move address and is due to have their bond returned then this bond can be carried forward to the new property and increased if there is a need.

We may fund a further rent deposit (4 weeks rent in advance) and/or bond and/or accommodation administrative fees in exceptional circumstances to enable a young person to move from their initial accommodation or where they have had to leave in an unplanned way.

Where a young person has not received a rent deposit / bond/ administration costs prior to their 21st birthday this financial assistance remains available to the young person up to their 25th birthday.

We will assure 6 months' rent to facilitate access to private rented accommodation.

To prevent homelessness due to rent arrears when former relevant young people reach 21 and lose entitlement to Universal Credit higher housing

allowances, for care leavers who are settled and have maintained their tenancy well, we will support them to apply for Discretionary Housing Payments, if unsuccessful we will top up any shortfall in rent brought by reductions in the Universal Credit Housing element until they are 25 to enable them to remain in the community where they are currently living. A Top-Up will be based on assessed need.

Care Leavers who have Kirklees Homes and Neighbourhoods (KHN) tenancies can access help with money worries from the KHN Money Advice Team.

MAU@kirklees.gov.uk

The team provide free and impartial advice to all tenants, offering a wide range of support on budgeting and money management, debt, rent matters and a whole host of issues arising from welfare reforms. Areas the team can help with include:

- Help managing debts
- Negotiating reduced payments with creditors
- Budgeting and day-to-day money management
- Support to ensure people receive their correct benefit entitlements
- Help filling in claim forms
- Assistance in dealing with letters about benefits
- Applying for grants from charitable organisations
- Ongoing advice and support

4.8 Council Tax

All Care Leavers who live in Kirklees that would normally be responsible for paying Council Tax, dependent on earnings, will be able to access the council's main Council Tax Reduction Scheme and will be entitled to a further reduction under the council's Discretionary Reduction Scheme. In effect, this means Care leavers will pay no Council Tax.

Where a care leaver is living outside of Kirklees, they will still be eligible for support with their council tax in line with the support they would receive if living in Kirklees. Where a care leaver is unable to access support via other local authorities' scheme, Kirklees Council will cover the costs in line with our policy, we will provide financial support to ensure Care Leavers living outside Kirklees are not unfairly disadvantaged.

4.9 Help with removal costs.

Removal expenses for up to 2 changes of address will be funded for all Care Leavers.

The Care Leavers Service will make sure young people have adequate and suitable luggage to pack and transport their clothes and small belonging in. Bin bags are not acceptable under any circumstances.

4.10 Setting up home allowance.

The timescale for moving on to independent accommodation will be different for each young person, and it is important that PA's have assessed a young person's increasing ability to cope alone before agreeing to any move towards more independent living.

When PA's believe their young person is ready to move on, young people who are Eligible', 'Relevant' and 'Former Relevant' are able to access funds to help them set up their new home.

A setting up home allowance is a one-off payment which may be paid in instalments and is used to enable and support a young person to move to an independent or semi-independent living situation. This allowance should only be accessed when a young person secures the tenancy of a flat or a house and this is in line with their Pathway Plan.

Because young people leave care at different times and move into different sorts of accommodation, it means that not everyone will need all the equipment and furniture for a home at once. Some young people may need a small amount of setting up home money to begin with, because, for example, they are moving into furnished accommodation and they don't need to furnish and equip a whole house/flat, so it is important young people can continue to draw down their grant between different accommodation settings throughout the time they receive support from us.

An allowance of £2800 is available to pay towards the cost of setting up their home. A list of suggested essential items which young people should have for setting up their home is set out in Appendix 3. £200 will be paid as an additional payment after twelve months when a Young Person has achieved a successful tenancy.

Young People should be given reasonable choice about how, and from where they purchase goods for setting up home. Following 'good parenting' principles, PA's and the Care Leaving Service should work with young people to share advice about value for money, quality and safety in respect to the goods and services they wish to purchase. Whilst there is a need to manage expectations, we should always consider 'is this good enough for my child?'

Any shared tenancy should be jointly furnished and, as such, entitlements will be paid on a pro rata basis.

All young people who move into independent accommodation will have the option of taking up a basic furniture and white good package.

In recognition that many people access TV via devices other than a traditional TV set and there is still a requirement for a licence, the Care Leaver Service will pay the first year's TV licence cost.

A TV should not be purchased by the young person from their setting up home allowance without a TV licence being funded,

Where the first TV licence is funded after the young person is 18, further TV licences are expected to be paid for by the young person from their income.

When a young person moves into accommodation where they need their own contents insurance this will be funded for the first year (and any subsequent years, up to the age of 18). This is a mandatory payment to protect the young person's belongings and is non-transferable.

4.11 Setting up home Starter Pack.

To get young people off to a good start when they move into their own accommodation for the first time, we will provide a 'welcome to your new home starter pack' up to the value of £70. It can be split anyway the PA and young person sees fit to best meet their needs but should cover these areas.

- A Welcome to your new home or congratulations on your new home card.
- Basic Food Supplies – Tinned, dried and packet goods, Cereal, Tea/Coffee, Sugar/Sweeteners, Cordial, biscuits, crisps.
- Cleaning Products – Washing up liquid, Washing Powder, Multipurpose Cleaner
- Toiletries – Toilet roll, toothpaste, deodorant, shower gel

5 **Aspire and Achieve.**

5.1 Education, Training and Employment.

We want Kirklees to be an exceptional place to learn and be educated, where from the earliest years we cultivate curiosity in children and develop a love of learning that continues to grow throughout their lives.

Our commitment is for every child, including those who are vulnerable or need extra help, to have the best start in life, the best opportunities to develop, and the support needed to achieve their ambitions.

Every young person should receive the support they need to achieve their full potential, leaving education ready for life and work and well placed to make positive contributions to the communities in which they live.

We believe in creating the right, inclusive environment to nurture talents and abilities.

We recognised that for some young people, staying in academic learning may not be the right path for them. With this in mind, this guidance will reflect that vocational learning is afforded equal value and weight to ensure young people in training or on apprenticeships are not disadvantaged.

To ensure care leavers have opportunities to achieve their potential and fulfil their aspirations, the Leaving Care Service will:

- Build on the foundations of young people's previous achievements and assessed strengths as set out in their Personal Education Plan (PEP).
- Provide high quality advice and guidance on accessing higher and further education and progressing plans for training and employment opportunities so that young people are aware of their options and can make informed choices about their future career options.
- Actively encourage and support young people to engage in education, vocational training and apprenticeships.
- Ensure each young person has a pathway plan that supports them in achieving their goals and which sets out the support they will receive.

- Continually review the young person's progress at pathway reviews to ensure they remain engaged and that adequate support is being provided to enable them to pursue their goals.
- Provide a gateway to lifelong learning for those young people who wish to return to education at a later date by linking in with the C & K Careers Service and the Virtual School to provide learning and training opportunities.

PA's have a duty to fulfil the role of a good corporate parent by ensuring that all care leavers recognise the importance of planning for their future careers and making the most of education and training opportunities.

In particular PA's should recognise the additional barriers to achievement and the attainment gap faced by care leavers and help them to have high aspirations and to build on their strengths whilst recognising their weaknesses and needs.

Where possible, care leavers should be encouraged to remain in education in order to help them be better prepared for independence and to improve their life chances and opportunities for future employment.

PA's should ensure that issues around education, training and employment are addressed in the pathway planning process and that the young person's pathway plan provides a package of support that promotes attainment.

Where Care Leavers are going on to Higher Education, the plan should also include details of not only any vacation accommodation to be provided when they return home on breaks, but what support will be in place for them whilst they are away on their course.

Whilst Higher Education establishments offer specific pastoral support for care leavers, it's not the same as being able to see and talk to someone that knows you well and who you have an established relationship with.

We want our young people to know how proud we are of them and how we will continue to be interested in their lives, to be there for them to share with someone how well they're doing and not just for when times are tough.

Every effort should be made to encourage young people to continue engaging with their PA whilst they are away. If the young person wishes it, PA's should regularly go and see their young people in their setting.

Careers Advisors within the Care Leavers Service and the Virtual School will be able to offer advice and guidance to both PA's and young people as pathway plans are created.

5.2 Education for Eligible Care leavers in supported or independent settings, Former Relevant and Relevant Care Leavers

Sometimes things don't work out the way we hope, outcomes at exam time is a good example of this. For young people who don't get the grades they need to continue their education, funding will be available for re-sitting GCSE's / A Levels / AS Levels if the young person requests and is committed to this.

The Leaving Care Service will offer financial support for care leavers through at least one course of further or higher education of their choice until they are 21 years old, or until the end of a programme of education or training, if this has been captured in their pathway plan.

If not met by a Bursary or charitable funding, costs may be met for:

- Registration and Examination fees.
- Textbooks and equipment specified as essential.
- Activities essential to meet course requirements including course trips.
- Public transport between accommodation and course centre.
- Transport costs to open days & college interviews.
- Specific clothing, including clothes for interviews and essential equipment related to the course.

Young people starting a course of Further Education from the age of 16 and before the age of 19 may be entitled to access the 16-19 Bursary Fund.

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund provides financial support to help students overcome the specific financial barriers to participation they face so they can remain in education.

There are 2 types of 16 to 19 bursaries:

- Bursaries for defined vulnerable groups of up to £1,200 a year.
- Discretionary bursaries which institutions award using policies they set, in line with these funding rules.

Schools / colleges / training providers are responsible for managing both types of bursary. They will set out the conditions students should meet to receive a bursary (e.g., attendance or behaviour) and when it will be paid.

The high level criteria for a young person being accepted for a bursary are set out below.

- A student must be aged 16 or over but under 19 at 31st August to be eligible for help from the bursary fund.
- Students aged 19 or over are only eligible to receive a discretionary bursary if they are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers') or have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- Students aged 19 or over are not eligible for bursaries for vulnerable groups.
- Students aged under 19 enrolled on higher education qualifications are not eligible for support.
- Students on apprenticeship programmes, or any waged training, are classed as employed, rather than in education. They are not eligible for the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund.

The Bursary Fund Guide is refreshed on at least an annual basis. For further information on qualifying criteria and vulnerable groups covered, please use this [link](#).

PA's and Careers Advisors will support young people to make their applications.

Care Leavers can claim Income Support / Universal Credit and Housing Benefit whilst in further education from their 18th birthday until the end of the academic year in which they are 21. For young people who cannot access this, either because they are over 21 years or for some other reason, an assessment should be carried out and, subject to the outcome of that assessment, personal allowances may be paid. Accommodation may also be provided, or the means to secure it.

5.3 Education, training and voluntary work financial support incentives ('Eligible', 'Relevant' and 'Former Relevant' young people)

A financial support incentive of up to £25 a week may be paid on top of any Maintenance Allowance to young people undertaking part-time education / training and/or a minimum of 5 hours voluntary work per week as an incentive to continue this if they cannot access a Bursary Fund.

It may be paid as a regular payment at the same time as the Maintenance Allowance, in advance or retrospectively, based on attendance and commitment. Payment may be time-limited, reflective of the length of course or training.

Where a young person receiving a Maintenance Allowance is undertaking part-time employment then their income will not be deducted as an incentive to encourage them to continue to work

Young people attending a course which is 16 hours or over per week will be considered to be in full-time education and will receive the equivalent of the 16 – 19 bursary i.e. up to a maximum of £1200 per year.

This will be reflective of a 52 week year and as such this allowance equates to £1200 divided by 52 weeks = £23.07, however it has been agreed that training incentive will be rounded up to a maximum payment of £25 a week.

For young people on courses that are less than 16 hours a week, payments will be based on actual attendance in days.

- Part-time course 4 days £20
- Part-time course 3 days £15
- Part-time course 2 days £10
- Part-time course 1 day £5

Young People should receive either the 16-19 bursary or the Education / Training incentive allowance, not both.

If an eligible or relevant young person is a parent and wishes to continue with a Further Education course of study, they may be entitled to access a Care to Learn Grant for funding towards childcare and travel costs.

<https://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn>

- 5.4 Additional costs -Books, equipment, clothing and devices for studying.
In addition to the bursary fund, a discretionary allowance of up to £300 per year towards costs incurred as a result of a particular course of study, this could be to assist young people to purchase essential items such as books, equipment, laptops, clothing, or to support them to take part in field trips which their course may require.

This allowance should be available to young people who are fully co-operating and engaged with their Pathway Plan.

An application for a Personal Education Plan Support Allowance (PEPSA) may also be made to cover the cost of one-off course equipment or educational trips.

Where a PEPSA application has been received up to the maximum amount or applied for and refused and the young person is unable to access the Bursary Fund then necessary course equipment may be funded from the Leaving Care budget, based on assessed need.

The Care Leavers service reserves the right to reclaim the full amount of the allowances paid towards 'course costs' should a young person fail to demonstrate an appropriate level of commitment to completing their studies.

We recognise the necessity of needing an appropriate device to use not just for studying but to support staying connected with friends, family and support networks. As part of our commitment to digital inclusion, all care leavers will be provided with a device to meet their educational and personal needs.

- 5.5 Support into work.

For care leavers who want to experience work, the council will support young people into work by offering part-time jobs and apprenticeships.

The Council will help managers to support care experienced young people they employ in their services.

- 5.6 Completion of Apprenticeships and Vocational work

In recognition that vocational learning and apprenticeships are important, on successful completion of vocational courses and apprenticeships, these young people will receive a special recognition and gift vouchers to the value of £250 at the annual Achieve Awards.

- 5.7 Higher Education (Former relevant young people)

When care leavers against the odds have succeeded in getting somewhere most of their non-care experienced peers take for granted, it's important there is continued access to informed and good quality practical, financial and emotional support to enable young people to sustain their ability to study.

Whilst young people wishing to undertake Higher Education course will need to fund their course fees, accommodation costs and day to day living costs themselves, there are loans and grants available to cover these costs. Tuition Fee Loans and Maintenance Loans for living costs are available to care leavers. Full information can be found at; <https://www.gov.uk/student-finance/new-fulltime-students>

If after starting an undergraduate course of study a young person wants to change course or attend a different higher education institution, the young person needs to discuss this as soon as they can with their PA and prior to changing course /institution to confirm whether funding for accommodation will be approved for this.

Any Former Relevant or young person over the age of 21 and up to the age of 25 who wishes to re-engage with Children's Social Care and pursue a part-time or full-time course of Further or Higher Education may contact the Local Authority and request an assessment of their needs.

5.8 Income in Higher Education

As mentioned above, Former Relevant young people undertaking a recognised course of Higher Education are eligible to access a Tuition Fee Loan, Maintenance Loan, Maintenance Grant and an Accommodation Loan provided by the Government.

In addition, young people undertaking a recognised course of Higher Education are also eligible to claim a Higher Education Bursary of £2,000 from the Care leavers Service.

Young people who start a course before their 25th birthday are also entitled to access the Higher Education Bursary if they have not received this previously.

A young person who is also an unaccompanied asylum seeker is also entitled to the Higher Education Bursary provided they are not appeals rights exhausted.

PA's will arrange for the bursary to be paid in instalments over the length of the course. See Appendix 4 for payment schedule.

If there is a delay in this being paid after term starts, a transitional payment from the Leaving Care service will be considered until the student grant/loan is available.

Arrangements about the reimbursement of this payment will be made on a case by case basis and recorded in the Pathway Plan.

Some Universities and Colleges also pay Institutional Bursaries and extra bursaries for students who have been in care.

Whilst the onus is on the young person to apply for grants and loans in a timely manner, like any good parent would, PA's, with support and advice from the Careers Advisors will assist where required in applying for all these and also to charitable organisations for any additional funding to help maximise a young person's income and to help reduce the amount of loans a young person needs to apply for.

Further information about Student loans and Grants can be found at:
www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance

An overview of Student Finance can be found in Appendix 5.

These loans and grants will be considered by the Care Leavers Service as the young person's income and as such the total amount available (claimed or not claimed by the young person) will be used when calculating any allowances that may be available from the Care Leavers Service.

For the purposes of calculation, the summer period (12 weeks) will be treated separately from the rest of the year (40 weeks).

The details and principles identified within Kirklees financial guidance establishes that young people who are living independently and attending education on a full-time basis require a weekly income of £120 (i.e. a full subsidy) after rent costs have been met if they are buying their own food. This guidance will be applied to young people attending University. An example of how this might be calculated is shown in Appendix 6.

During holidays, the Care Leavers Service will continue to offer young people financial support during this period.

The level of this support will include all reasonable rent costs and basic income maintenance to reflect the Universal Credit level

5.9 Higher Education Allowance.

We are committed to doing all we can to make sure children get the best start in life, our aspirations are to carry this through as far as we practically can, so a young person gets the best start at an adult life as well.

We know Higher Education is expensive and many students will finish their studies with considerable amounts of student debt as a result of the loans they take out.

We want to do all we can to reduce the amount of debt our care leavers accrue, so with this in mind, our Higher Education financial support offer provides the potential for care leavers to choose whether they want to take out any student maintenance loans.

On top of the Higher Education Bursary of £2000, subject to the young person's continued engagement with their PA and the Higher Education Setting we will provide:

£87.90 a week (maintenance and incentive)

£54.00 a week accommodation element

Total £141.90 per week for all elements

Payments made for 52 weeks a year.

We will provide a travel card for travel to and from university during term time, PA's will make sure young people and their belongings are taken to and from university at the beginning and end of terms, if required.

5.10 Consent and support.

It is so important that the Care Leavers Service can continue to support young people who are able to go on to higher education.

To do this to the best of our abilities, we need young people to provide written consent that allows the Care Leavers Service to liaise with both Student Finance England and the University where the young person will be studying.

Consent is required to allow the Care Leavers service to discuss / clarify any issues with regard to general support or finances that may occur.

We need to reassure young people and be clear that the Care Leavers Service will only contact Student Finance England, Universities or their respective support services with the young person's knowledge.

The arrangement around support and consent needs to be a written agreement between the young person and the Care Leavers Service and be signed prior to the start of the academic year.

5.11 Graduation

Successful completion of Higher Education courses is a huge achievement in any young person's life.

We will make sure Care Leavers can celebrate Graduation events as any other young person would and ensure they have someone there to share what might be their proudest moment in their life.

If a young person wishes, the Care Leavers service will make sure the person they are closest to attends, this might be their PA, social worker or other professional who has supported them over the years.

Financial support should be provided to the amount of £250 to cover the cost of Gown hire, photographs, tickets and invitations together with sundry expenses.

5.12 Graduation Bursary for Higher Education.

Young people successfully completing their degree course will receive a one-off Graduation Bursary from the Council following graduation. This amount of £3,500 is to provide both financial support immediately following graduation and in recognition of their achievement.

6 Healthy and Well.

No matter where young people live, work or study we want to them to be able to live their lives confidently and have good physical and mental health and well-being. We want to nurture young people to become resilient adults, but ultimately, we just want our young people to be happy.

What helps contribute to mental health and wellbeing will be different for each young person. As Corporate Parents, we need to remember and not lose sight of what motivated and made us happy as young people.

In our roles as officers of the council, we might view some of these things as materialistic and luxuries – a new pair of trainers might seem unimportant in the grand scheme of things, especially when we have to manage and keep within our budgets, but to some young people, how they look and what they wear will be significant factors to how they feel about themselves. Being able to take part in activities and go on holiday will all impact on how included in their wider peer group they feel.

Feeling lonely, excluded or isolated is not something experienced only by older people. Increasingly young people are reporting feeling lonely and disconnected.

The Care Leavers Service is committed to doing all it can to reduce inequalities and ensure young people are supported to be able to participate in the same life, cultural and leisure opportunities their non-care experienced peers have.

This section of guidance sets out things we can do to support health and wellbeing.

6.1 The Care Leavers Pot

Unplanned asks for financial support are common. Getting approval and sign off from a Team Leader or Manager for each request creates a large workload and can take time for requests to be approved. Understandably, this can lead to a lot of frustrated young people who don't really care about our internal decision making processes, they simply want to know can they have what they've asked for.

To speed things up and in recognition that PA's and Social Workers are probably the people that know their young people's the best, a pot of up to £550 per year will be available for PA's to use to meet unplanned requests in the best interest of their young people.

This pot of money is in addition to any other allowances or grants outlined in this guidance.

PA's will have autonomy in decision making in regard to this pot of money, however, once it's exhausted, there will be no further funding available until the next financial year.

Any further unplanned requests will need to be considered under the guidance for Emergency Payments.

6.2 Clothing Allowance

Clothing allowances in Residential Care

For those young people who are 16+ and remain in residential care, their clothing costs will be paid from the residential budget.

Clothing allowances in Foster Care

For those young people who are 16+ and remain in foster care, their clothing costs will be paid from the fostering carer's allowance.

Where a young person stays with their former foster carer once they turn 18 in a Staying Put arrangement, the clothing element paid to carers' stops because the young person will have their own source of income and are expected to use that to buy their own clothes. As the young person approaches 18, foster carers should ensure young people have at least the basic minimum wardrobe set out below.

Clothing allowances for young people moving to independent living in the community.

Young people moving to living independently in the community should leave care, residential and foster care, with suitable clothing. The following list is for guidance and is the basic minimum a young person should leave care with:

- A winter coat.
- A summer jacket or coat
- Several jumpers and sweatshirts
- At least 2 pairs jeans/trousers
- At least 2 skirts/dresses, or if the young person prefers, increase the pairs of jeans/trousers.
- An outfit suitable for interviews.
- Sufficient underwear and socks.
- At least 3 t-shirts
- At least 2 shirts/blouses/tops
- 1 pair of trainers
- 1 pair of shoes
- 1 pair of boots suitable for bad weather conditions

After living independently for a period of 6 months, and if the young person is engaged with their PA, Education, Training or Employment (ETE), 'Eligible', 'Relevant' and 'Former Relevant' young people may apply for a clothing allowance of up to £300 per financial year. It should be noted that this allowance does not entitle young people to £300 for clothing but should be on individual need.

The year runs from April 1st to March 31st in line with the budget. Pro rata payments will therefore be made dependant on the time of year.

6.3 Birthdays and Celebrations.

Every young person should have something to look forward to on their birthday. Whilst most young people may want a cash present for their birthday so they can purchase what they want, there may be some young people that would appreciate a gift to open and for someone to see them and simply say 'Happy Birthday – have a great day'.

Best practice would be to buy a gift for young people.

In addition to the amounts below, PA's can take the young person out for a meal on their Birthday up to the age of 25 if the young person wishes. This can be up to £60.00 in total (£30:00 per person) for the 18th and 21st Birthday and £40.00 (£20.00 per person) for other Birthdays. Alcohol cannot be purchased with public money.

Every young person will receive a birthday card from their PA and or Social Worker.

Birthday present amounts for young people (including Eligible and Relevant young people placed with parents) are:

- 16th and 17th Birthdays - £150
- 18th Birthday - £175
- 19th and 20th Birthdays -£30

- 21st Birthday -£75
- 22nd to 25th Birthday - £30

Regardless of whether young people are living independently, living in a Staying Put arrangement or placed with parents, they will receive these amounts:

Exceptions

A 'Qualifying' Young Person will not be entitled to a Birthday allowance.

Young people in custody at the time of their 16th, 17th or 18th Birthday who would normally be entitled to the Birthday Allowance should have their allowance banked and given to them upon their release from custody. However, any expenditure whilst in custody can be considered on a case by case basis.

Christmas and Faith Celebrations

It is important we encourage and support our young people to celebrate their diverse cultural and religious backgrounds.

An annual allowance to celebrate religious or cultural festivals is available to all care leavers. Young people may wish to split their allowance over more than one festival, however the total payment will be the same as set out below.

Regardless of whether young people are living independently, living in a Staying Put arrangement or placed with parents, they will receive these amounts:

16 and 17 year olds - £150

18 to 25 - £50.

Exceptions

A 'Qualifying' Young Person will not be entitled to a Christmas or Cultural Celebration Allowance.

Young people in custody who would normally be entitled to the Christmas / Cultural Celebration Allowance will be entitled to a reduced allowance of £30 which should be banked and given to them upon their release from custody. However, any expenditure whilst in custody can be considered on a case by case basis.

6.4 Leisure.

Young people should be encouraged to make use of leisure facilities, and to pursue sports, hobbies and pastimes. Some young people may have talents or abilities, which should be encouraged and nurtured.

Financial support through a Pathway Plan might include:

- help with sports equipment.
- help with musical instruments, tuition costs, exam fees, sheet music etc.
- help with membership fees of clubs.

- special training or coaching fees.
- music, dance, art or singing lessons.
- payment for services at sports clubs and facilities.
- The cost of maintaining contact with family and other people who are important.
- Maintaining and supporting cultural and religious needs.

All care leavers can access free Kirklees Active Leisure (KAL) Membership Funding and assistance may be available through other sources e.g. sporting or arts-based organisations, community interest groups or through education or youth work initiatives. In some circumstances it may be possible to fund part of the cost of activities by 'match funding' with another organisation, or for the young person to contribute themselves. PA's should investigate all potential sources of funding streams.

This list is not exhaustive, and Pathway Plans should take account of individual circumstances when detailing support to be provided. As a general principle any activity which encourages the young person to use their time constructively, promotes a healthy lifestyle, and/or helps the young person develop and maintain positive relationships should be considered within the planning process.

6.5 Holidays and passports

In addition to being a key document needed for identification purposes, passports open the door to the world of travel.

The Care Leavers Service will fund a passport up to the age of 25. However any loss or damage to the passport is the responsibility of the young person and replacement costs will need to be met by them.

We want young people to share the same experience of travel and holidays many of their peers have. As well as warm climates and beaches, travelling gives young people the opportunity to see and experience different cultures, history, cuisines and if young people have a talent – put their language skills into practice.

Care Leavers (eligible, relevant, former relevant including placed with parent and Staying Put) are able to access an annual holiday allowance up to their 21st Birthday of £500.

Exceptions

'Qualifying' young people are not entitled to a Holiday Allowance.

Where a young person is deemed, by their Social Worker / Personal Advisor, not to be cooperating with their Pathway Plan, the availability of the Holiday allowance will be reviewed, and may be withdrawn, following consultation with a Team Manager.

6.6 Transport and travel.

Similar to a passport, the ability to travel can open up opportunities for young people. It can help a young person secure employment and training or make it

easier to get there, especially if there are rota's and shifts that are outside the hours of public transport.

It can help young people keep in touch with friends and family and broaden their horizons by being able to see different parts of the country if they are able to save up and buy and insure a car.

However we need to make sure there are other options available to support young people to travel, some young people may not be able to drive for medical reasons or affording a car and the insurance might be a way off in the future.

Increasingly, we need to consider the Climate Emergency and our commitment in Kirklees to reducing Carbon Emissions and look at what we can offer that contributes to this.

6.7 Public transport.

Weekly and Monthly bus passes can be provided by the Care Leavers Service subject to individual need and on a case by case basis. This is usually to help support young people to attend training or interviews.

Our aspiration is to work with regional public transport providers to provide all Care Leavers with a travel bus pass which is not just half fare or limited to off peak.

6.8 Driving Lessons.

We will provide funding to support young people through the learning to drive process, from obtaining a provisional licence, driving lessons through to taking the Driving Standards Agency (DSA) Theory Test and taking of the DSA Driving test.

'Eligible' and 'Relevant' and 'Former Relevant' young people aged 17 to 21 years and in full time education, training or employment are entitled providing they are engaging with their pathway plan and PA.

If a young person has just started lessons prior to their 21st birthday, payments should continue until they pass their test and they will remain an open case until this is completed.

Exceptions

'Qualifying' Young People, Asylum Seeking Young People who have not been granted leave to remain.

What we will fund.

Provisional Licence: Full payment

Theory Test: Full payment - should a young person fail their test; we will fund up to 3 theory tests (first one should be taken prior or at least half-way through starting driving lessons)

DSA Driving Test: Full payment – Should a young person fail their test; we will fund up to 3 practical tests.

Driving Lessons: Full Payment – We will fund up to 55 hours of driving lessons. This is based on the average number of lessons it takes to pass a test plus 10 lessons. This can be taken weekly or as an intensive course and guidance will be sought from the driving instructor which would best meet the needs of each young person.

PA's should encourage the young person to book, plan and commit to continuing their driving lessons to allow themselves the best possible chance of passing their test/s.

It is expected that the practical test is passed after 55 hours of driving lessons.

*exception may be given for parents who are not in ETE but are fully engaged with their Pathway Plan and PA

If the young person has or receives any driving convictions prior to or during the course of driving lessons, financial support may be withdrawn immediately. Advice from a Team Manager/Leader should be sought.

Where a young person is deemed, by their Social Worker / Personal Advisor, not to be cooperating with their Pathway Plan, the availability of financial support re driving lessons will be reviewed, and may be withdrawn, following consultation with a Team Manager/Leader.

Where concerns are identified regarding a young person's misuse of drugs or alcohol financial support will not be offered.

Whilst buying a car and associated costs such as insurance, fuel and repairs are the responsibility of the young person to fund, PA's will support young people to put plans in place to help them save to buy a car.

6.9 Cycle Scheme

Cycling not only is a good way of keeping fit, but it is a good way to reducing the impact we have on the environment.

The Council will fund a bicycle and safety equipment for young people who would prefer a greener way of travelling.

6.10 Support to stay in touch.

Over the course of this year, we have as a society realised how important it is to be able to stay in touch with family and friends. We have seen the significant detrimental impacts on mental health and well-being where young people have not been able to do this.

As an organisation, we are considering what contact and keeping in touch with friends looks like and how we can make best use of digital technology to support young people to maintain their networks.

As mentioned earlier in this guidance, the council is committed to reducing inequalities, this includes digital inequalities as well as the more common themes such as poverty and education attainment gaps.

For all care leavers, the council will fund or provide one suitable device such as a Chromebook or laptop which can be used for both education purposes if the

young person is continuing in education and for keeping in contact with family and friends. This device will be the responsibility of the care leaver, the council cannot be responsible for loss, theft or damage.

A device alone isn't much use without access to Wi-Fi. The council will provide 4G routers or Dongles to care leavers to help keep them connected to those most important to them.

Whilst virtual contact can be helpful and a lot of young people might prefer this way of engaging, it's by no means the only way and there are benefits to be gained through in person contact. Young people views should be central when planning what contact looks like for them.

As part of pathway planning, we capture each young person's relationships with their peers, friendship network and significant adults and how all these relationships will contribute to them making a successful transition to adulthood and how they will assist with integration into the community that they identify with.

We have a Duty to ensure young people who are Eligible receive funding to maintain contact with their families.

Funding for Relevant and Former Relevant young people will also be provided to enable a young person to maintain contact with significant family and friends where they do not live in Kirklees. This should be based on using public transport i.e. bus or train. Private Hire/Taxis should not be used. Tickets should be booked in advance where possible to reduce costs.

If contact with a family member is of a significant nature, due to a special event (such as a wedding, birthday party or significant religious event) young people can request a contribution from the Care Leavers Service to support them to attend the occasion.

This may be, for example, the cost of a meal in a restaurant of up to £20.00, taking part in a leisure activity or buying of a small present. No alcohol or tobacco can be funded through public money.

6.11 Young Parents and Child Care equipment.

We are Corporate Grandparents as well as Corporate Parents. Ensuring the next generation of children get the best start in life to avoid the need for formal social care intervention is non-negotiable.

Becoming a parent can be overwhelming for anyone regardless of age. For young people who become parents, we must support, encourage and offer any help we can so they flourish and become confident and capable parents.

Young parents should be encouraged and helped to access support such as Auntie Pam's, local parenting support groups and universal services through the Early Support Teams

Care Leavers on low incomes or benefits may be able to claim a Sure Start Maternity grant of up to £500 from the DWP at 11 weeks prior to the due date

of the baby for their first child. PA's should work with young expectant mothers to make sure this is claimed in all cases.

In addition the Care Leavers Service will provide a one off sum off £200 in the third trimester to support young parents to buy essential items

A suggested list of necessary items is:

- Cot plus 3 sets of bedding
- bottles
- Sterilizer
- Buggy & Cover
- Safety gate
- Clothing / Nappies
- Baby monitor

6.12 Support with Health needs

As young people leave care, we want them to be able to stay healthy and continue to access health service such as dentists, GP's and opticians.

If a young person is moving out of the area where they are currently registered with a GP practice, PA's should encourage and support care leavers to find a new GP and dentist.

Young people who are aged 16, 17 and 18 and who are undertaking full time education or training courses will generally be exempt from the majority of NHS health charges. Exemptions include:

- NHS prescription,
- Dental charges
- Sight tests (free to young people under nineteen and undertaking full time education).

For young people aged 16/17 who are not undertaking full time education or training courses and who receive financial support from the Care Leavers Service, there are arrangements in place for claiming help with health costs.

These young people will be fast-tracked to help through the NHS Low Income Scheme. They will need to fill in either a short claim form HC1 (SC) or full HC1 form. The form should then be sent off in the envelope provided. It will be dealt with immediately on receipt and an NHS exemption from charges certificate (HC2) for full help sent to the young person.

Young people aged over eighteen who are being supported by the local authority and do not automatically qualify for an exemption, (for example, young people being financially supported to undertake education courses) should complete a HC1 form and submit the form together with information from the Care Leavers Service about the level of support.

Young people will then be sent an NHS full exemption from charges certificate (HC2) or a partial exemption from charges certificate (HC3) depending on their level of income.

The Care Leavers Service will hold copies of the HC1 (SC) and full HC1 form, but they can also be obtained from Jobcentre Plus offices, NHS hospitals and from some doctors, dentists and opticians.

The NHS Forms order line on 0845 610 1112 or by email from the following address: nhsforms@spsl.uk.com

The exemption certificates will last for 12 months or until the young person's 18th birthday, whichever is longer.

Single parents and young people who are sick or disabled and in receipt of some benefits, will be exempt from NHS prescription, dental charges and sight tests charges by virtue of their benefit claim.

Information about HC11 'Help with health costs?' is also available at

<http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/HealthCosts/1558.aspx>

The Care Leavers Service will use its discretion in whether to provide any additional financial contributions towards meeting young people's health needs.

An example of the type of support offered is additional money to top up the basic amount available through the NHS to buy glasses. Decisions will be made on a case by case basis up to a maximum of £100 or matching the value of any NHS voucher a young person may have- whichever is the greater sum in any one financial year.

Support with transport costs to attend appointments particularly where frequent appointments are needed will be supported.

6.13 Emotional wellbeing, counselling or therapeutic needs.

For young people under the age of 18 a referral should be made to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service.

For young people over 18, whose identified needs mean they are entitled to a service from Health or Adult and Community Services then any support and care needs will be funded as part of their Care Plan.

6.14 Care Leaver Participation.

Participation enables care leavers to become involved in shaping Kirklees services by getting involved in decision making processes via consultation forums, workshops and projects.

Through being involved, it can also provide a valuable social network of peer support for care leavers and give young people the confidence, skills and experience that will enable them to improve their employment prospects.

We will pay £20 per day pro rata for specific consultation work.

6.15 Emergency Payments.

Despite all the allowances and support in this guidance, there will undoubtedly be times where young people fall on hard times.

To prevent the crisis escalating further in exceptional circumstances we will consider making a one off emergency payment.

These payments should be made according to need to alleviate a crisis where a young person has no other access to finance. Food parcels can be an alternative to emergency payments, but the preference would be to support the young person to develop better living skills by working with them to create a budgeted meal plan which will sustain them over this period and take them shopping for food they need.

It may be that the young person needs help to develop cooking skills, for instance, cooking in batches which can be cheaper, or it might be that they don't have basic white goods such as a fridge or freezer to store food.

Every effort should be made to get underneath what has happened, what the young person's situation is and what support can we lever from other agencies if necessary, to help the young person take control of their situation and avoid a revolving door of emergency payments.

This policy makes a conscientious decision not to set a limit on how much an emergency payment should be. What is most important is that the Personal Advisor works with the young person to understand how they have reached this crisis point and together find a way forward, putting in more support if needed to try prevent this happening again.

Use of the Care Leaver Pot can also be considered as a means by which to ensure young people do not experience poverty.

If the young person's pot is exhausted and an emergency payment is needed, this must be approved by the Team Manager.

It is important to remember that in circumstances where the emergency payment is for gas or electricity the spending must be supervised. Consideration needs to be given to how much the pre-payment will take back in debt owed when the top up is applied.

It is generally unacceptable to approve more than 4 emergency payments in any 12 month period. It is important to note that just because this guidance suggests 4 emergency payments could be made, it should not be seen as acceptable for a young person to be presenting for this many emergencies.

It should not be viewed as definitive if the young person is considered to be at extreme risk despite having received previous payments. The Team Manager and Service Manager will make any final decisions regarding this.

Appendix 1

Eligibility criteria, background and exemptions.

General information for guidance to eligibility:

The provisions of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 came in to force, in England on 1 October 2001. The principle aim of the Act being to improve the life chances of young people living in and leaving Local Authority Care.

The Act places various duties on Local Authorities; specifically, Services to Children and Young People Departments to assess and meet the needs of 'Relevant' Care Leavers aged 16-17. Consequently, Kirklees 'Relevant' Care Leavers will be supported by the Care Leavers Service, which will provide them with maintenance and accommodation until they reach the age of 18. 'Eligible' young people and 'Relevant' Care leavers are not generally entitled to Universal Credit (UC) or the housing element of the Universal Credit.

However, where a young person is:

- A lone parent
- A single person looking after foster children
- Incapable of work
- A disabled worker
- A disabled or deaf student
- Registered Blind
- Appealing against a decision that they are not incapable of work
- In relevant education; severely mentally or physically disabled and unlikely to obtain employment within the next twelve months
- In relevant education, and a lone parent of a child for whom they are treated as responsible and is treated as a member of their household.

That young person should not be treated as either an 'Eligible' or a 'Relevant' child for the purposes of entitlement to benefits and would have access to Universal Credit, so long as all other conditions are met.

Young people placed with foster carers are financially supported through the foster care allowance which is paid directly to foster carers. However, there is a general expectation that carers offer support to young people in line with this financial guidance.

The children (Leaving Care) Act created legal categories of young people.

'Eligible' young people are young people who remain Looked After, aged 16-17, and have been in care for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14. The role of the Looked After Children and Care Leavers service with these young people is to develop a Pathway Plan which defines their current Service and is clear as to the support that will be available when they leave care.

(except where the Local Authority placed the young person in a pre-planned series of short-term placements, none of which exceeds 4 weeks even if they amount to 13 weeks and at the end of each placement the child or young person returns to their parents, or the person who has parental responsibility).

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking young people accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act and meeting the above criteria will be entitled to the same level of support as other Looked After Children.

'Relevant' young people are aged 16-17 who have previously been Looked After for 13 weeks including sometime as a 16 year old, who have now left care. 'Relevant' young people have their maintenance and accommodation costs paid by the Council as defined within the financial guidance.

'Former Relevant' young people are Care Leavers aged over 18 and were 'Eligible' or 'Relevant' prior to their 18th birthday. These young people have their accommodation and maintenance needs met through the same systems open to other young people of the same age i.e. they can usually claim Income Support and financial assistance with housing costs.

Young people who begin Higher Education prior to aged 21 will be supported in accordance with existing guidance until the end of their course or aged 25.

Young People over the age of 21 who make a new request for financial support for Education or Training will only be supported to the maximum of Income Maintenance and Housing Benefit level. This support will be subject to an assessment of needs.

'Former Relevant' young people have access to personal support and some ad hoc financial support to assist with meeting some specific needs identified in the financial guidance.

'Qualifying' some young people qualify for support (1989 Children Act Sect 24).

'Qualifying' young people are over 16 and under 21, (or under 24 if in education or training) who have spent less than 13 weeks in care with at least some time as a 16 year old. These young people are entitled to advice and some limited financial assistance as defined within the financial guidance.

Appendix 2

Board Contributions.

The level of contributions made by a young person should be in relation to their earnings or alternatively their income maintenance Board payments are made by young people who live in accommodation where food is provided e.g. supported lodgings.

Board payments are made in accordance with scale below

if earning:	Contribution
up to £100	£20.00
£100-£125	£23.00
£126-£150	£27.00

£151 and over	£32.00
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Maximum payable per week = £32.00

All young people pay a minimum of £20.00 per week if living in a placement where food is provided.

Rent Contributions.

The level of contributions made by a young person should be in relation to their earnings.

Where a young person is in paid employment, receives a net weekly take home pay which is above £120 per week and living in either supported accommodation or their own tenancy, contributions to housing costs made by the Care leavers service will be reduced, with an expectation that young people should pay a rent contribution based on the following table.

Young Persons weekly net income	Young Persons weekly rent contribution
Less than £120 pw	£0
£121 - £130 per week	£10
£131 - £140 per week	£20
£141 - £150 per week	£30
£151 and over per week	£40

If a young persons' net weekly wage exceeds £150, the maximum rent contribution would be £40 per week.

Young people whose net weekly take home pay is less than £120 per week are not expected to make a contribution to their rent.

Appendix 3

Setting up home essential items for young people

This list is not exhaustive, and account should be taken of each young person's circumstances when considering items of importance for a young person setting up home.

Furniture

- Bed and mattress (new)
- Wardrobe
- Chest of drawers
- Sofa
- Easy chairs
- Dining table & chairs
- Coffee table
- Shelving/storage

Kitchen and household equipment

- Cooker & fitting of (if gas must be by a registered professional)
- TV - license must be purchased by the care leaver's service.
- Washing machine and fitting of
- Tumble drier - using radiators to dry clothes causes damp and mould in property
- Fridge / freezer
- Microwave
- First aid box/kit
- Spare Keys
- Fire/Carbon Detectors, Fire Blanket – Must have
- Basic tool kit – hammer, screwdrivers, tape measure,
- Cutlery & Crockery - 4 place settings of cutlery – dinner plates, bowls side plates, mugs, knives, forks, spoons, teaspoons (new)
- Set of kitchen utensils, including knives for preparing food (new)
- Pans
- Kettle
- Iron
- Ironing board
- Bowl / drainer / bins – consider bin systems to aide recycling and separation of waste
- Vacuum cleaner
- Mop & bucket.
- Toilet brush

Linens and soft furnishings

- Carpets
- Curtains & Curtain tracks/rails and fitting of
- Duvet (new)
- Duvet sets x 2 (new)
- Sheets x 2 pairs (new)
- Pillows x 2 (new)
- Towels x 6 (new)
- Tea towels x 6 (new)
- Lamps & lampshades (new)
- Other items which may be particularly relevant to that young person e.g. photos, photo frames

Appendix 4

Higher Education Bursary payment schedule.

Where a young person is applying for or attending University on a higher Education Course whose duration is a minimum of 2 years, they will be supported financially to a maximum of £2,000.

This financial support is in addition to existing support provided by the Care Leavers Service as detailed within this guidance document.

The majority of study courses are of 3 years duration, accordingly, bursary payments should be made into a young person's bank account as follows:

1st year

£250 paid in the September prior to the young person starting their University course and £250 in March the following year.

2nd year

£250 paid in the September prior to the young person re- commencing their University course, following the summer break and £250 to be paid in the September in March of the following year.

3rd year

£250 paid in the September once the young person has re- commenced their University course, following the summer break and £250 to be paid in March the following year.

£500 paid to the young person upon completion of their course.

Where a young person leaves the course prior to completing it, for any reason, then the remainder of the unpaid bursary will not be paid.

If a young person temporarily leaves the course or is required to re-start the course, then no additional bursary will be paid, however the bursary payments will continue as detailed above to a maximum of £2,000.

If a young person intends to start a course and the 1st year bursary payment is provided, should the young person not start the course, or withdraws within the first 8 weeks then this money should be returned to the local authority.

Appendix 5

Student Finance overview

Student Maintenance Loan:

The Maintenance Loan is there to help with accommodation and other living costs.

The maximum loan is £9203 (2020-2021) - more if studying in London (up to £12010). Student Finance England usually pays the money into a young person's bank account in three instalments - one at the start of each term.

Full-time student	Loan for courses from September 2020
Living at home	Up to £7,747
Living away from home, outside London	Up to £9,203
Living away from home, in London	Up to £12,010
You spend a year of a UK course studying abroad	Up to £10,539

Tuition Fee Loan:

The Care Leavers service cannot accept responsibility for tuition fees and as such it is expected that young people will apply and subsequently receive Tuition fee loans in line with the majority of their peers who will be attending university

The Tuition Fee Loan covers the full amount a young person is charged for tuition fees

Liability for the repayment of Maintenance and Tuition loans will always be held by the young person in receipt of these loans. The Care Leavers Service cannot accept any responsibility for the repayment of these loans

Appendix 6

Higher Education Income calculation example

When calculation Higher Education income, the Care Leavers Service will divide the total income available from grants and loans by 40 weeks to identify a young person's normal weekly income.

If this figure is below £120 after rent/housing costs have been deducted, the Local Authority will top this figure up to £120 per week.

As means of illustration for a young person attending university in 2020/21 living in a hall of residence with weekly rent cost of £135;

Total Grant and loan available	£9203
Rent Costs*	(40 weeks x £135) = £5400
Total Grant and Loan minus Rent Costs	£9203 - £5400 = £3803
Total income divided by 40 weeks week	£3803 / 40wks = £95.07 per week
Top Up by the Local Authority to £120**	£24.93 per week

*In order to qualify for the Top Up, all rent costs must be agreed by the Local Authority in advance of the young person signing for student accommodation and all loans and grants income must be declared.

**If food or utilities are provided by the student accommodation, then the Top Up by the Local Authority will be up to £105 per week to reflect this.

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