

Middlesbrough Council Pathways Leaving Care Service

Policy and Guidance Relating to Financial Assistance

**Version 3.3
Reviewed April 2017**

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SECTION 1

POLICY

1. The purpose of this policy is to outline the Wellbeing Care and Learning Department's financial commitment to young people, in line with the statutory requirements of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and Volume 3 Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers to achieve best practice for young people in and leaving care.

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 introduced financial arrangements for care leavers and made it clear that the responsible authority will normally be the young person's primary source of income. Those aged 16 and 17 years old are not able to access Income Support, Job Seeker's Allowance or Housing Benefit.

All such financial assistance is the responsibility of Wellbeing Care and Learning Department, and covers income maintenance, accommodation, housing costs and other expenses such as travel and leisure.

Each young person will have a different set of needs and an individual capacity to manage a budget. Some young people may have sources of income of their own, such as a training allowance or wages from employment. This means that in each case where Middlesbrough is the responsible authority, a financial support package will be agreed and detailed in their Pathway Plan based on their individual needs.

All payments over and above income maintenance and housing costs for 16/17 year olds are discretionary and not an entitlement.

Items that are considered to be a priority for financial assistance include:

- Travel costs e.g. for education and training
- Education materials/special equipment
- Other educational costs
- Costs associated with special need (pregnancy or disability)
- Contact with family or other significant relationships
- Cultural/religious needs
- Counselling/therapeutic needs
- Hobbies/leisure pursuit

It must be noted that this list is not exhaustive and any other requests for financial support should be discussed with the Team Manager or the Service Manager.

SECTION 2

POLICY GUIDANCE

ELIGIBLE AND RELEVANT YOUNG PEOPLE

2. Eligible Young People

2.1 Definition

An Eligible Child is one who is aged 16/17, has been looked after by the Local Authority for a period of 13 weeks since the age of 14, and who remains looked after. The period of 13 weeks need not have been continuous and may be made up of a series of shorter periods during which the child was looked after. A part of the total period must have taken place whilst the young person was 16 or 17 years old.

Planned periods of short breaks do not count towards eligibility.

2.2 Young people remanded into the care of the Local Authority

Young people remanded into the care of the Local Authority or is on remand within a young offenders institute are regarded as Eligible, even if they are not given a custodial sentence, as long as the period of remand is for 13 weeks or more and part of the total period took place whilst the young person was aged 16 or 17 years.

NB once the child moves into Custody their looked after period would end and they are no longer classed as looked after.

2.3 Unaccompanied asylum seekers

Eligibility is not affected by other special status. Young people under the age of 18 years old and who are seeking asylum are considered Eligible.

Relevant Young People

2.4 Definition

the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, a Relevant Child is 16 or 17 who have already left care. They have previously an Eligible Child but who is no longer Looked After, and is under the age of 18.

Note: Young people on Care Orders remain Eligible until such time as they reach 18 or the Care Order is discharged.

2.5 Young people detained or in hospital

The Regulations provide an additional category for relevant children. These are young people who, on reaching 16 are detained in a remand centre, young offender institution or any other institution ordered by the Court and, immediately prior, to being detained or in hospital had been looked after for 13 weeks since the age of 14.

2.6 Young parents

Relevant Young people who are lone parents **can claim** Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance and other related benefits. For all other purposes of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, they are considered Relevant.

2.7 Income maintenance - young people living in residential or foster placements

Young people remaining in residential and foster care will not receive income maintenance paid directly to them by Pathways. They will receive a personal allowance/ pocket money from their carers, which will be identified on making the placement and detailed within their Pathway Plan.

2.8 Income maintenance - young people living independently

This is a payment made by Pathways to “maintain a young person’s income”. Generally, the payments mirror the rates paid by the Department for Work and Pensions. Payments will be detailed within the young person’s Pathway Plan.

It should be noted that the income maintenance level can be “paid” in kind as well as cash, and for some young people food, fuel top up etc. can be used to replace cash.

2.9 How young people are paid

Ideally, all young people should be paid directly into a bank account. If this is not appropriate or possible, cash payment forms will be issued to the young person for collection at Middlesbrough House. The young person will be made aware of their particular day to collect their money.

If a young person is not in education, training or employment the person’s money will be split. There are other circumstances where a young person will be assessed as needing their payments split. In this instance an individual pattern will be agreed within the payment week. Some examples might be - Monday and Friday, three times a week or on a daily basis.

In exceptional circumstances payments may be temporarily withheld until young people make some efforts to access education, employment and training. This will be for a maximum of 3 days within any 1 week.

2.10 Accommodation costs

Young people aged 16 and 17yrs old are not entitled to Housing Benefit, therefore, all accommodation costs will be met by the Pathways. The accommodation will be agreed by Pathways and must be appropriate to the needs of the young person and value for money.

Where young people are in employment and therefore able to contribute to their own accommodation costs, assistance from the Pathways budget will be calculated on an individual basis with the budget holder.

The contribution from a young person towards utilities when living in supported accommodation is expected to be paid by the young person from their income maintenance. However, this money can be deducted at source and paid directly to the accommodation provider. This should be as detailed within the young person's Pathway Plan.

2.11 Assistance for further education and training courses

Financial assistance for local further education and training courses can be paid from the Pathways budget to young people who are studying or training.

- The young person will be assessed as being able to study at the required level for the course identified by either a relevant college or a place of study and/or an Integrated Youth Support Service adviser.
- Course/Exam fees to be identified and mapped out for the duration of the course.
- Any request for financial assistance to be planned and made in a timely manner i.e. 12 weeks prior to commencement.
- All arrangements should be detailed as part of their Pathway Plan.

Assistance to such young people can be extensive and have a long term impact on the budget. As such, staff should be mindful when requesting financial assistance that all other avenues of financial support have been exhausted. In the first instance, the Education Bursary available from colleges and training providers should be applied for, alongside any discretionary funds available.

2.12 Education incentives

Incentive payments will be made to those young people who are engaged in an approved course of education and **who are not eligible to receive the education bursary**. The young person's Personal Adviser and the Education Provider must verify the course. Young people need to be aware that the Personal Adviser will expect proof of their attendance on a weekly basis. The incentive will be paid for the duration of the course, one week in arrears.

Incentive payments will be paid at a rate of £5.00 per day. The young person can receive a maximum incentive of £25 per week.

If a young person is in a foster / residential placement, they will not receive an incentive from Pathways. Their carer remains responsible for any incentive/pocket money paid to the young person.

2.13 Training

For those young people on training courses, a weekly allowance is paid directly to them by their training provider; therefore Pathways does not pay any income maintenance to the young person. (Unless the training allowance is less than the current JSA rate, in which case the difference should be made up). Incentive payments are at the same rate as for education incentives.

2.14 Support with leisure facilities

Middlesbrough young people who are looked after and care leavers are entitled to free leisure card and access to Middlesbrough facilities. To arrange access, the young person should ask their Social Worker or carer for an application form.

If a young person is in a foster or residential care placement, they will not receive financial support from Pathways for leisure. Their carer remains responsible for any incentive/pocket money paid to the young person. Young people should be encouraged to make use of leisure facilities and to pursue sports, hobbies and pastimes.

Some young people may have particular talents or abilities which could and should be nurtured.

Financial support through a Pathway Plan might include:

- Help with sports equipment
- Help with musical instruments, tuition costs, exam fees, sheet music etc
- Special training or coaching fees
- Music or singing lessons
- Payment for services at sports clubs and facilities

This list is not exhaustive and Pathway plans should take account of individual circumstances when detailing the support to be provided.

Assistance may be available through other sources, such as sporting or arts-based organisations, or through education or youth work initiatives. Also, it may be possible to negotiate discounts with leisure centres or clubs for individuals or groups to participate in activities.

It may also be decided to fund some of these activities part way by “match funding” with another organisation or for the young person to make a contribution themselves towards the cost.

2.15 Books/ essential clothing for education/ training

An allowance of **up to £100 per academic year** may be paid towards books and essential clothing to eligible young people who are attending a full time course of education or training.

A partial payment may be considered for those young people who are attending part time courses.

When requesting the above, the young person’s Personal Adviser should be satisfied that a young person will attend the course (check with course tutor where necessary). The spending must be supervised.

Any request for equipment required for college/training will be assessed on an individual basis.

2.16 Travel costs for education/ training

When a young person is engaged in a course of education or training and not in receipt of the education bursary, additional finance can be accessed. Verification that the college or training provider does not supply financial assistance for travel should first be obtained, prior to a request for travel costs.

For those young people in full time education or training, an additional payment may be made to enable the purchase of a weekly travel pass. (Note NUS cardholders get a reduced price).

For those on part time courses, the amount will be the normal daily travel costs (day saver). If the part time hours cost exceeds the cost of a weekly pass, then a weekly pass should be provided.

2.17 Identification

Pathways will support young people to have a copy of their birth certificate. Pathways will also support young people in gaining suitable photographic identification in the form of a passport or a driving license.

2.18 Financial assistance to eligible young people in work and living in the community

Young people who are in employment may still qualify for financial assistance, if they fit the criteria for financial assistance. In an attempt to assist young people in work, there are various options available to their Personal Adviser.

- If a young person is working full time and paying towards accommodation costs, Pathways may provide an incentive to ensure they have no less than £85.00 per week.
- Pro rata assistance may be offered to those young people to take up part time employment.

Any financial assistance considered for a young person in work must have approval from the **Team Manager** or the **Service Manager**.

2.19 Interviews

An additional clothing allowance for an interview will be considered, in consultation and agreement with the Team Manager.

Guide prices:

Shirt/ blouse	£5.00 - £10.00
Trousers/ skirt	£10.00 - £20.00
Shoes	£15.00 - £30.00
Boots	£25.00 - £35.00

2.20 Travel payments

A travel payment can be requested, in **exceptional circumstances**, for those young people who need to attend hospital appointments, visit family (where agreed in their Pathway Plan), attend job interviews etc. The payment should, where possible, be in the form of a travel/bus pass. The young person's Personal Adviser should have checked the detail of the request before referring to the budget holder.

2.21 Clothing allowances for young people living in the community

A clothing allowance will be available to young people (under 18 years old) once every 6 months to a maximum of £100. All spending will be on a supervised basis.

Relevant young people who are not engaging with their personal adviser may have their allowance reviewed and reduced to £50 every 6 month to encourage future engagement.

Special circumstances

Consideration needs to be given to a young person who becomes pregnant. The Personal Adviser may apply for additional funding.

2.22 Birthday, Christmas and other cultural celebrations

Eligible young people who remain in foster care or residential care will receive a birthday allowance from their carer. For eligible young people who live in semi-independent or independent living, they will receive a purchased gift to the value of:

For relevant young people to celebrate birthday's young people will receive a gift to the value of;

17 years £80

For Christmas

Young people who are 16 or 17 years old and are no longer in care;

Christmas £100

2.23 Emergency payments

Emergency payments are made to alleviate a particular crisis where a young person has no other access to finance. Such payments should be made only after careful consideration of the circumstances. Any emergency payment must be made only after consultation with a manager; an agreed amount will be paid as a separate, individual payment.

A reasonable suggestion is that a young person is given £5 per day or the equivalent given in food, until they are due their next income maintenance payment. A weekend payment should not exceed £15 and food parcels should always be considered as an alternative to cash where possible.

It is important to remember that in circumstances where the emergency payment is for gas or electricity, the spending **MUST** be supervised.

Emergency cold weather payment

An emergency cold weather payment maybe accessed should a young person live semi-independently or independently. This is usually in extreme weather conditions reported as minus degrees over a number of days. This payment will be accessed according to the Met office weather reports and the Department for Work and Pensions paying out a cold weather payment in the area the young person lives. This is usually a one off payment of £15. Pathways workers will be able to access this by requesting via the Pathways Team Manger. This payment will be a supervised spend.

2.24 Debts/Fines

Pathways will not give financial assistance towards debts or fines incurred by young people.

2.25 Damages

In a situation where a care leaver is the tenant and damages to property of a third party (landlord, supported accommodation provider, etc) resulting from the malicious, careless or intentional action of a young person may lead to a situation where the young person needs to pay for any damages. In such circumstances, where the third party is not pressing charges or claiming against their insurance and there is no other source of finance apart from the young person's Setting up Home Allowance, an assessment will be conducted as to whether financial support will be provided.

2.26 Dental/Opticians Assistance

Eligible/Relevant young people will not incur charges for dental and optical care due to being under the age of 18 years. In addition and where necessary, additional funding from Pathways budget can be made available to a maximum of £75.

2.27 Prison

Young people in prison/young offenders serving custodial sentences are not deemed to be living independently and therefore do not qualify for income maintenance.

However, Pathways will support these young people financially by paying them an allowance of £10 per month. This is to enable them to buy toiletries, phone cards etc. Payments must be by postal order and made payable to the Governor with the young person's details entered on the reverse.

2.28 Setting up Home Allowance

Please see section 3 for details.

SECTION 3

POLICY GUIDANCE

FORMER RELEVANT YOUNG PEOPLE

3. Former Relevant Young People

3.1 Definition

Former Relevant young people are those young people who have reached 18 and who were previously an Eligible or Relevant young person **prior to** becoming 18.

If someone is being helped with an agreed course of education or training, as detailed in their Pathway Plan, they remain a Former Relevant Child to the end of their agreed programme, even if that takes them past the age of 21.

3.2 Income Maintenance

These young people may need to make a claim for Income Support or Job Seekers allowance. The Personal Adviser, prior to any request for financial assistance from Pathways budget, must see proof that this has been done (where possible with the assistance of the Personal Adviser and with liaison between Pathways and the Department for Work and Pensions). An application for benefits generally takes up to 2-4 weeks to process and is paid in arrears. This will leave the young person without money for this period. In these circumstances, a request may be made for income maintenance to be paid from the Pathways budget.

If, through no fault of their own, their benefit is not set up within a two week period, the young person needs to be supported in accessing an interim payment from the Department for Work and Pensions.

This also applies to young people who may lose their jobs and need to apply for benefit.

The young person must be living in an independent living situation with no other source of income.

3.3 Delays in Benefit Agency Payments

Occasionally, situations may arise where the young person has fulfilled all the requirements to make the appropriate claim but the Department for Work and Pensions has subsequently postponed a decision or lost/ failed to receive necessary information. If this leads to a delay in payments being made and it is **not** due to the actions of the young person, then a request may be made for a continuation of income maintenance at the full rate, as per JSA. **If this is approved, the claim must be monitored on a weekly basis. The Personal Adviser needs to consider requesting a discretionary payment by the benefit agency if the delay in payment is through no fault of the young person.**

3.4 Accommodation Costs

Former Relevant young people in receipt of Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance are entitled to claim Housing benefit and therefore should claim in the usual way.

Young People are responsible for paying their own Council Tax bill each month.

3.5 Further Education and Benefits

If a young person is in Further Education full time, **post their 18th birthday** but prior to their 20th birthday, they **are entitled** to Income Support and Housing Benefit on the grounds of being estranged from their parents and engaged in education. The PA should help them to make this claim.

When a young person is in further education full time, post their 20th birthday, their claim for Income Support and/or Housing Benefit may continue. Enquiries should be made to the Department for Work and Pensions at the earliest opportunity prior to their 20th birthday. If they are no longer entitled to these benefits but the young person chooses to go into education, this must be agreed and detailed in their Pathway Plan, be for an approved course, and be monitored and reviewed regularly to avoid any disruption to a vocational or academic qualification. An assessment of the young person's finances should be completed by the PA, in order for Pathways Team Manager to determine the level of financial support needed.

3.6 Incentive Payments for Further Education and Training Courses

Further Education

Incentive payments will be made to those young people who are engaged in an approved course of education and **who are not eligible to receive any payment via the government education bursary**. The young person's Personal Adviser and the Education Provider must verify the course. Young people need to be aware that the Personal Adviser will expect proof of their attendance on a weekly basis. The incentive will be paid for the duration of the course, one week in arrears.

Incentive payments will be paid at a rate of £5.00 per day. The young person can receive a maximum incentive of £25 per week.

A Former Relevant young person in full time education who is no longer eligible for Income Support will be required to complete a financial assessment to determine whether a financial package will be provided. The maximum payment will be in line with Income Support.

Young people in receipt of Income Support and Housing Benefit will receive their incentive via Section 24, which allows the local authority to pay with no impact to their benefit.

3.7 Training

For those young people on training courses, a weekly allowance is paid directly to them by their training provider, therefore Pathways does not pay any income maintenance (unless the training allowances is less than the single person under 25 rate of Job Seekers Allowance, in which case we would make up the difference).

We do, however, pay the incentive payments at the same rate as for education.

3.8 Books/Essential Clothing for Education/Training

An allowance of up to £100 per academic year may be paid toward books and essential clothing to relevant young people who are attending a full time course of education or training.

A partial payment may be considered for those young people who are attending part time courses.

When requesting the above, the young person's Adviser should be satisfied that the young person will attend the course (check with course tutor where necessary). The appropriate spending should be supervised.

Any request for equipment required for college/training will be assessed on an individual basis.

3.9 Financial assistance to young people at work

Young people who are in employment may still qualify for financial assistance if they fit the criteria for financial assistance. In an attempt to assist young people in work, there are various options available to the Personal Adviser.

- If a young person is working full time and paying towards accommodation costs, Pathways may provide an incentive to ensure they have no less than £85.00 per week.
- Pro rata assistance may be offered to those young people to take up part time employment.

Any financial assistance considered for a young person in work must have approval from the **Team Manager** or the **Service Manager**.

3.10 Travel Payments

A travel payment can be requested for those young people who need to;

- visit family (where agreed in their Pathway Plan)
- attending an interview
- first week of work, depending on how the young person is getting paid

The payment should, where possible, be in the form of a travel/bus pass. The Personal Adviser should have checked the detail of the request before referring to the budget holder.

3.11 Identification

Pathways will support young people to have a copy of their birth certificate. Pathways will also support young people in gaining suitable identification in the form of a passport or a driving license.

3.12 Higher Education

This section outlines the financial help available to Middlesbrough care leavers thinking about going to university and to those enrolled in higher education courses at college. The exact amount of financial help a young person will receive will depend on the particular course and personal circumstances.

Financial support will be agreed as long as the care leaver is due to finish the degree course by the time they turn 25 years old.

A young person at university can access financial help from a number of sources. The Student Loan Company can offer financial help as a loan, repayable at the end of the course and when the student is earning above a specified amount, as set by the Student Loan Company.

Other financial help is offered as a grant, which is not repayable, e.g. non-repayable bursary from the local authority or bursary from the university or college. The grant money may not cover all of the young person's costs but will be enough for them not to have to work during term time. This enables young people to concentrate on their studies and it will be enough to minimise the size of their student loan.

The following guidelines illustrate the levels of support a student may receive from either Pathways or the university/college they will be attending. It is expected that course details will be provided to Pathways prior to the start of the course.

UCAS Applicant

Care leavers can seek support in completing their University and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS) Form. Also, the young person will be financially assisted and supported to visit the universities where they may be interested in making an application. There is a charge to submit a UCAS form and care leavers can request support towards this, depending on their financial circumstances.

Maintenance Loan

Care Leavers are able to apply for a Maintenance Loan to support with living costs from Student Finance England. This will be repayable by the young person after they have graduated and are earning in excess of £21,000 per annum, when a monthly amount will be deducted.

This is not always essential and the student should speak to their Personal Adviser before taking out such loans.

University/College Bursary

Care leavers may be eligible for a bursary and/or other financial support from their university or college.

Applications for these should be made direct to the university/college.

Care Leavers are encouraged to identify themselves as a Care Leaver on their UCAS application in order for the University to be aware of their status. This may entitle the student to extra financial support directly from the university.

Tuition Fees

The student will apply for a student loan for fees to be covered. The maximum tuition fees will be £9,250 per annum. This will be repayable by the young person after they have graduated and are earning in excess of £21,000 per annum, when a monthly amount will be deducted.

If attendance does not meet the required level during the first year and the young person does not progress to the next year, they will become liable for the fees charged for that year.

Local Authority Support Bursary

A £2,000 university support bursary is available from the local authority. This is subject to change and the student is always advised to check information regarding the bursary with their Personal Adviser. This bursary will be paid in instalments, for example, 6 equal payments over a 3 year course. Payment arrangements will be discussed and agreed between the Personal Adviser and student. This is non repayable.

Accommodation Fees

Pathways Team will not fund accommodation costs, this is the responsibility of the young person. The young person should work with the PA and university in order to identify and secure suitable and affordable accommodation.

The local authority will support a young person to secure vacation accommodation during university breaks.

Graduation Fees

Pathways will support the young person to hire their graduation cap and gown.

Masters Fees

Pathways will provide a one of fee of £1500 to support a young person to access a Masters Degree. The young person will need to provide evidence of their grades received from their degree course and a covering letter from the University that the University is in support of this level of studying.

Support from Middlesbrough Council

It is expected that any young person who is intending to enter higher education will inform their Personal Adviser at the earliest opportunity. The PA will then work with the young person to complete a financial assessment; when the following will be taken into consideration:

- Accommodation costs
- Access to any bursary paid from the university/college
- Access to a maintenance grant from the university/college

The student will need to apply for a tuition fees loan and any bursary available from the university/college.

Pathways will pay a weekly allowance to the student at the same rate as Job Seekers Allowance/Income Support in order to support with living costs. If needed Care Leavers can apply for a maintenance loan to support with their living costs, this is repayable to Student Finance.

Young people studying away from the area may be provided with financial assistance to maintain their tenancy or supported lodging placement during term time, if appropriate. Pathways would expect that the allowance during the holiday time would be used to pay for accommodation.

Young people are expected to use the university bursary to pay for books and equipment that are essential for the course. However, an annual book allowance of £100 may be available. The student's Personal Adviser will look into individual requests, the student's university reading list will be required to support decision making.

Depending on the distance between the young person's accommodation and the university/college, travel costs will be covered as agreed within the financial assessment.

In exceptional circumstances, which would otherwise result in severe hardship, we may consider requests for payment of relevant and appropriate costs.

Other

A student in Higher Education is not penalised if they secure a part time job whilst at University, as this could be considered to be a normal part of the University experience. The PA should check however, that the hours worked do not impact negatively on the student's learning.

It is expected that students work during their summer break and contribute towards their living costs for this period.

To access ongoing financial support, the student must give Pathways the appropriate attendance details at the beginning of each term. They will also be expected to keep their Personal Adviser informed of their plans to ensure financial support is arranged and income is maximised. The student's Personal Adviser will be expected to support applications for maintenance loan, tuition fee loans and bursaries etc.

The financial implications of education maintenance are great and require close monitoring by the responsible worker and the budget holder. A financial commitment to support a student at University would be for the period of the course,

and could exceed the age of 21. All this detail should be agreed and recorded in a Pathway Plan.

Note

- Term time maintenance costs are calculated using minimum benefit rates and incentive rates.
- Vacation costs are calculated using the Children Leaving Care Act 2000 and Volume 3 and Guidance and Policy information from other Local Authorities via the National Benchmarking Forum.
- If the young person delays providing the request evidence of attendance and confirming of passing the course payments will not be backdated if there is a significant delay of more than 28 days.

3.13 Young people returning to Education or Training following their 21st Birthday

Any young person who has not gained a level 3 or equivalent qualification and decides that they want to return to further education beyond their 21st birthday may be entitled to support from Pathways. This support will be determined through an assessment of need and based upon individual circumstances. The young person should contact Pathways and inform the duty worker, Assistant Team Manager or the Team Manager of their intentions regarding the course of education they wish to pursue.

An initial assessment will be carried out to determine what support Pathways are able to offer financially and practically, and at what level. If a young person is entitled to support, the education, training, support and financial section of a Pathway plan will be completed with the young person and will clearly state what support will be provided, with relevant timescales.

Principles guiding a decision to provide support

Any request for support with education and training made by a young person over the age of 21 will be subject to an assessment process as detailed below and should not be seen as an automatic entitlement.

The scope of the support to be provided will be based on individual need. For example, whether or not additional support is required with accommodation or finance will be individually assessed. All available sources of support will be explored in considering any request.

The most recent pathway plan completed, on or around the 21st birthday, will be used as a reference to support the decision making process.

The decision making process will be guided by the Children Act Regulations and Guidance 2010 Volume 3, Section 3. Requests will be assessed flexibly in considering the support to be offered to young people post 21.

Decision making will be fair, equitable and based on transparent criteria.

The assessment process will consider whether the young person has demonstrated commitment and is ready for their chosen programme of education or training.

The young person should have an overall plan regarding what they hope to do when the programme is completed.

For requests of Further Education – If a young person holds a level 3 qualification, Pathways has the right to refuse the funding request.

3.14 Birthday, Christmas and other Cultural Celebrations

All former relevant young people who live in semi-independent or independent living will receive a purchased gift to the value of:

18 years	£100
19 years	£25
20 years	£25
21 years	£50

For over 18's a gift of £20 will be given to a young person at Christmas or to mark his or her own cultural celebration.

3.15 Exceptional Clothing Payments

In exceptional circumstances, where a young person has lost their clothing by fire or theft, the budget holder may approve a one off payment of up to £65 in any financial year. Consideration of such a request would need care as precedents could be set.

3.16 Emergency Payments

Emergency payments are made to alleviate a particular crisis where a young person has no other access to finance. Such payments should be made only after careful consideration of the circumstances. Any emergency payment must be made only after consultation with a manager; an agreed amount will be paid as a separate, individual payment.

A reasonable suggestion is that a young person is given £5 per day or the equivalent given in food, until they are due their next income maintenance payment. A weekend payment should not exceed £15 and food parcels should always be considered as an alternative to cash where possible.

It is important to remember that in circumstances where the emergency payment is for gas or electricity the spending **MUST** be supervised.

Emergency cold weather payment

An emergency cold weather payment may be accessed should a young person live semi-independently or independently. This is usually in extreme weather conditions reported as minus degrees over a number of days. This payment will be accessed according to the Met office weather reports and the Department for Work and

Pensions paying out a cold weather payment in the area the young person lives. This is usually a one off payment of £15. Pathways workers will be able to access this by requesting via the Pathways Team Manager. This payment will be a supervised spend.

3.17 Dental/Opticians Assistance

Former relevant young people can use Form HC1 to access help with financial costs regarding dental and optical care. In addition, where necessary, additional funding from Pathways can be sought to a maximum of £75 for teeth and £75 eyes.

3.18 Debts/Fines

The Pathways, Leaving Care Service will not give financial assistance towards debts or fines incurred by young people.

3.19 Damages

In a situation where a care leaver is the tenant and damages to property of a third party (landlord, supported accommodation provider, etc) resulting from the malicious, careless or intentional action of a young person may lead to a situation where the young person needs to pay for any damages. In such circumstances, where the third party is not pressing charges or claiming against their insurance and there is no other source of finance apart from the young person's Setting up Home Allowance, an assessment will be conducted as to whether financial support will be provided.

3.20 Setting up Home Allowance

The Setting up Home Allowance is a payment that is used to enable a young person to move to an independent living situation and can only be accessed when a young person secures the tenancy of a flat or house. The preferred option is for the accommodation to be provided by the local authority, housing association or a voluntary sector housing scheme.

In some circumstances, it may also include a private rented property with a reputable social landlord. In these circumstances, extra care is required to ensure furniture can easily be removed when the tenancy is terminated.

The Setting up Home Allowance should only be requested when it is considered appropriate for the young person to move to an independent form of accommodation and they have the necessary skills to manage a tenancy. The accommodation should be in the name of the young person (the tenant) who is furnishing the property with their allowance.

Setting up Home Allowance can also be accessed for:

- First TV License
- Household insurance (contents)

The following need to be accessed via housing and the local bond scheme

- Rent in advance (should be accessed via discretionary housing benefit, if possible,)
- Bond (if a bond scheme can not be accessed then a request can be made via Pathways. This will be assessed on an individual basis and taking into account affordability i.e. how much money is left in the persons setting up home allowance.)

Any joint tenancy should be jointly furnished and, as such, furnished with up to 50% of the Setting up Home Allowance.

The Setting up Home Allowance is set up to a maximum, discretionary £2000.

Where possible, goods should not be paid for in cash. Orders can be placed using Pathways Team purchasing card. All payments must be recorded and totalled on the appropriate form in the young person's file. Any unspent monies **must be paid back** into the appropriate budget code.

All cash expenditure from the Setting up Home Allowance must be supervised. This must initially be by the young person's Personal Adviser from Pathways. Other colleagues or responsible persons may be involved in the spending of the allowance but accountability for receipts/ balancing/ supervision remains with the Personal Adviser.

Young people who return home **cannot access** their setting up home allowance.

Young people who are **in Bed & Breakfast** accommodation **cannot access** their Setting up Home Allowance.

Young people **in their Staying Put / Supported lodgings placement can access their setting up home as they will have a tenancy agreement.**

Please refer to setting up home allowance guidance and itemised costs for each item which is classed as essential for setting up home.

Lone parents, sick children and children with disabilities (as defined in the Income Support (general) Regulations 1987) are the exception in that they are still able to claim Income Support or Job seeker's Allowance or Employment Support Allowance including any relevant premiums. This is because such children have special needs recognised by the benefits system in advance of the 2000 Act. In every other respect their financial arrangements are the same as those for other relevant children. When agreeing the level of support to be provided, the Pathways Team will take into account the sums available through the benefit system. If a young person has a period of sickness and claims benefits, Pathways will need to bear in mind the Department for Work and Pensions schedule for payment, to make sure that this is not a gap in the support arrangements.

In making any financial decision with regards to payments to a young person, Pathways must consider the impact on any benefit claim from the Department for Work and Pensions.

SECTION 4

POLICY GUIDANCE

YOUNG PEOPLE WHO RETURN HOME

4. Young People who Return Home

Young people who were looked after under Section 20, and are placed with a parent or someone who has parental responsibility for them for a period of 6 months or more, will become Qualifying after that time. Financial assistance as per Qualifying young people then applies (see section 5).

Until the young person has been at home for 6 months or more then they remain Eligible or Relevant dependent upon their legal status.

Pathways are aware that in some cases parents have been successful in applying for appropriate benefits. In this instance, the young person will not be entitled to the same financial support as outlined in the eligible or relevant section and will be assessed on an individual basis.

4.1 Young People at Home on Care Orders

If a young person is subject to a Care Order and living at home, he/she remains Eligible under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 until the Care Order is discharged; either by the Court or by the young person reaches the age of 18 years.

Pathways are aware that in some cases parents have been successful in applying for appropriate benefits. In this instance the young person will not be entitled to the same financial support as outlined in the eligible or relevant section and will be assessed on an individual basis.

If a young person is living at home, the person with parental responsibility is expected to claim Child Benefit, if the young person is in continuing education. This should be used to support the child.

Income maintenance is not paid to those young people who live at home. Pocket money payments as per residential units may be paid to the young person or their parent.

Education and training incentives may also be applied for when a young person lives at home. All the normal procedures apply when requesting this allowance. If the young person is not attending either education or training, then payments as per Benefit allowances may be made to the parent in exceptional circumstances and **only with the agreement of the Team Manager or Service Manager.**

SECTION 5

POLICY GUIDANCE

QUALIFYING YOUNG PEOPLE

5. Qualifying Young People (Section 24 Children Act 1989)

Any young person who is 'Qualifying' can request a Pathways needs assessment, Pathway plan and a financial assessment. The following outlines what they **may** be entitled to.

5.1 Definition

Any young person under 21 (or 24 if in education or training) who ceases to be looked after or accommodated in a variety of settings e.g. hospital, or privately fostered, after the age of 16. This also includes young people who are under a Special Guardianship order or private foster care.

5.2 Financial Assistance

Payments to these young people are made under Section 24A and 24B of the Children Act 1989.

Qualifying young people are able to claim Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance and Housing and Council Tax Benefit and therefore should claim in the usual way.

5.3 Further Education and Benefits

If a young person is in further education full time, **post their 18th birthday** but prior to their 20th birthday, they **are entitled** to claim Income Support and Housing Benefit.

When a young person is in further education full time, post their 20th birthday, their claim for Income Support and/or Housing Benefit may continue. Enquiries should be made to the Department for Work and Pensions at the earliest opportunity prior to their 20th birthday. If they are no longer entitled to these benefits but the young person chooses to go into education, this must be agreed and detailed in their Pathway Plan, be for an approved course, and be monitored and reviewed regularly to avoid any disruption to a vocational or academic qualification.

A Qualifying young person in full time education who is no longer eligible for Income Support will be required to complete a financial assessment to determine whether a financial package will be provided.

Agreement for funding must be gained from the budget holder prior to the start of the course.

5.4 Setting up Home Allowance

The Setting up Home Allowance is a payment that is used to enable a young person to move to an independent living situation and can only be accessed when a young person secures the tenancy of a flat or house. The preferred option is for the accommodation to be provided by the local authority, housing association or a voluntary sector housing scheme.

In some circumstances, it may also include a private rented property with a reputable social landlord. In these circumstances, extra care is required to ensure furniture can easily be removed when the tenancy is terminated.

The Setting up Home Allowance should only be requested when it is considered appropriate for the young person to move to an independent form of accommodation and they have the necessary skills to manage a tenancy. The accommodation should be in the name of the young person (the tenant) who is furnishing the property with their allowance.

Setting up Home Allowance can also be accessed for:

- First TV License
- Household insurance (contents)

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- Rent in advance (should be accessed via discretionary housing benefit, if possible,)
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Any joint tenancy should be jointly furnished and, as such, furnished with up to 50% of the Setting up Home Allowance.

The Setting up Home Allowance is set up to a maximum, discretionary £2000.

Where possible, goods should not be paid for in cash. Orders can be placed using Pathways Team purchasing card. All payments must be recorded and totalled on the appropriate form in the young person's file. Any unspent monies **must be paid back** into the appropriate budget code.

All cash expenditure from the Setting up Home Allowance must be supervised. This must initially be by the young person's Personal Adviser from Pathways. Other colleagues or responsible persons may be involved in the spending of the allowance but accountability for receipts/ balancing/ supervision remains with the Personal Adviser.

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claim Income Support or Job seeker's Allowance or Employment Support Allowance including any relevant premiums. This is because such children have special needs recognised by the benefits system in advance of the 2000 Act. In every other respect their financial arrangements are the same as those for other relevant children. When agreeing the level of support to be provided, the Pathways Team will take into account the sums available through the benefit system. If a young person has a period of sickness and claims benefits, Pathways will need to bear in mind the Department for Work and Pensions schedule for payment, to make sure that this is not a gap in the support arrangements.

In making any financial decision with regards to payments to a young person, Pathways must consider the impact on any benefit claim from the Department for Work and Pensions.

5.5 Financial assistance for qualifying young people

Young people who are in employment may still qualify for financial assistance, if they fit the criteria for financial assistance. In an attempt to assist young people in work, there are various options available to Personal Adviser.

- If a young person is working full time and paying towards accommodation costs, Pathways may provide an incentive to ensure that they have no less than £85.00 per week.
- Pro rata assistance may be offered to those young people to take up part time employment.

Any financial assistance considered for a young person in work must have approval from the **Team Manager** or the **Service Manager**.

5.6 Travel Payments

A travel payment can be requested for those young people who need to;

- visit family (where agreed in their Pathway Plan)
- attending an interview
- first week of work, depending on how the young person is getting paid

The payment should, where possible, be in the form of a travel/bus pass. The Personal Adviser should have checked the detail of the request before referring to the budget holder.

5.7 Emergency Payments

Emergency payments are usually payments made to alleviate a particular crisis, where a young person has no other access to finance. Such payment should be made only after careful consideration of the circumstances. Typically, some of the most vulnerable and demanding young people will be those in most need of emergency payments.

An Emergency Payment should be made only after consultation with a manager and an amount may be given on a one off basis. A reasonable suggestion is that a

young person is given £5 per day or the equivalent is given in food, until they are due their income maintenance. A weekend payment of cash should not exceed £15 and food parcels should always be considered as an alternative to cash where possible.

It is important to remember that in circumstances where the emergency payment is for gas or electricity, then the spending **MUST** be supervised.

5.8 Dental/Opticians Assistance

Qualifying young people can use Form HC1 to access help with financial costs regarding dental and optical care. In addition, where necessary, additional funding from Pathways can be sought to a maximum of £75 for teeth and £75 eyes.

5.9 Debts/Fines

Pathways will not give financial assistance towards debts or fines incurred by young people.

5.10 Higher Education

Please see section 3 for the support.