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Feedback:

We welcome feedback regarding our policies and procedures. If you have any comments about this guide please e-mail:
financehub.central@stockport.gov.uk
1. **Introduction**

Children’s Social Care services and budgets are not intended to provide income support, however in exceptional circumstances they can provide assistance to families where children are assessed as “being in need” in line with the definition in Section 17 – Children’s Act 1989.

This has the potential to include large numbers of children, and therefore priorities for services have to be determined based on assessment of the child’s need. These priorities are set out in the continuum of need threshold document.

There will always be exceptions to the policy, when individual circumstances are taken into account but the following provides a general framework for decision making.

2. **Loan or Grant?**

   - Section 17 says assistance may be unconditional or subject to conditions as to the repayment of the assistance or of its value (part or whole) – i.e. it can be a grant or a loan.

   - No person shall be liable to make any repayment of assistance provided through section 17 if that person is in receipt of Income Support or Family Credit. Thus any payments or assistance to people in this position will constitute a grant.

   - For people not in receipt of Income Support or Family Credit, Section 17 assistance should normally be given in the form of a loan unless there are exceptional circumstances making this inappropriate. When assistance is given on a loan basis, this should be made clear to the recipient and steps taken to see that the money is repaid. Written agreement must be obtained and witnessed.

   - Social Workers should refer to Credit Union if applicable.

3. **Who is not eligible?**

   - There are four categories of people who are excluded from support by the local authority according to immigration law (Schedule 3 Section 54 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002) and they are as follows;

     - Nationals of the European Economic Area (Other than UK)
     - People with refugee status from an EEA state
- People unlawfully present in the UK (Including those whose visas have expired)
- Failed asylum seekers who have refused to cooperate with removal directions.

- In such cases the local authority must assess whether withholding or withdrawing support would constitute a breach of the individual’s or family’s human rights. Legal advice must be sought.

- The local authority may also conclude that the only support that is necessary to avoid a breach of human rights is the provision of assistance to the individual or family in returning to their country of origin.

4. Levels of Need

Stockport Family and partner agencies provide a range of services for children and their families from universal services available to all, targeted services for those requiring extra support, to specialist and rehabilitative services where crisis or urgent intervention is required.

The Stockport Family continuum of need provides a useful way of conceptualizing the different levels of need and the service response. The Children Act threshold for Children in Need is the threshold for a service provision by Social Care.

Payments under Section 17 are made to children and families according to need in the following categories:

4.1. Small payments to cover emergency situations.

- No money will be provided by Social Care without an assessment which must clearly state the need that is to be met and how the payment will meet that need. An application form is at appendix 1.

- This assessment will explore all other options such as food banks and charities (including Stockport Local Assistance Scheme/Penny Pantry) before providing any financial assistance. Where appropriate, food or vouchers should be given instead of cash. Where cash is given the guideline is £5 per child per day (nothing for adults). Subsistence should initially only be given for 1 day, three if covering the weekend, and the claimant will be asked to go to DWP the following working day.
• Money for gas/electric is only provided where exceptional circumstances prevail e.g. where there is a small baby or vulnerable child. The maximum should be £10 to cover immediate need. Vouchers will be issued.

• Payment for essential travel will only be considered for distances of more than 2 miles and for the cost by public transport. The only exception is when public transport is completely unfeasible, or if it is cheaper by taxi.

• In the case of lost or stolen money proof that they have informed the police will also be required.

• A directory of local services to help in emergency situations is available and should be used to re-direct requests for assistance wherever possible. A number of such agencies are listed in Appendix 3.

4.2. Planned payments to support a specific outcome in a social work plan.

• Returning children home to their parents when a child has been subject of S31 or S20, and where lack of provision would prevent the child returning home.

• Day Care e.g. child minders or nursery, and only in the short term as part of a child protection plan. Review monthly with Service manager authorisation.

• To facilitate temporary private care arrangements e.g. when parent may be hospitalised. Only appropriate if it is evident that the viability and success of the arrangement is dependent on financial assistance. The main financial responsibility for the arrangement lies with the child’s family. At the very least, the parent should be expected to provide the person caring for the child with the child benefit received for that child. Any Section 17 payment should be based on actual costs.

• To enable a parent or guardian to attend a Child Protection Conference.

• To enact recommendations within the child protection plan drawn up at the Child Protection Conference.

• Telephone costs may be paid when this is essential for the child’s protection e.g. significant risk of DV to family.

• Furniture and essential household equipment. Charities should be approached for assistance but where this is not possible only essential items should be
purchased and these should be second hand whenever possible. Beds and bedding should be provided for the children only – these should be sourced through the finance hub to ensure best value for money.

- Educational expenses are not met by Social Care and schools/VST should be approached about the use of the Pupil Premium.

- After school and holiday activities will only be supported if part of a Child Protection Plan, or of preventing the need to accommodate. It is expected that free activities would be used and paid activities would only be funded in exceptional circumstances.

- Cost for family trips/holidays will not be met.

- Baby equipment such as fireguards, stair gates, bottles and sterilising equipment can be provided to maintain children safely at home. Pushchairs will only be provided in exceptional circumstances, and the least expensive suitable model available.

- Regular weekly payments should be authorised for a limited period only as part of a CIN, CP or CLA plan and reviewed before this period expires by the Social Worker and Team Manager. Review monthly.

- The maximum time for which payments can be made without being reviewed is 1 month. However in most cases this should be less.

- If committed expenditure will ultimately exceed the initial authorising officer’s delegated powers, approval of the next senior authorising officer must be sought at the outset. Full costs should be presented for authorisation.

- Families with disabled children who require support services or short breaks to enable them to safely care for their children may receive regular payments as part of a TAC plan or parents have the right to request that support is given through a direct payment or personal budget.

4.3. Support for housing costs to prevent children being accommodated from a homeless family.

- While the local authority has a duty to promote the upbringing of children by their families, housing needs for homeless/vulnerable families are discharged
through the relevant housing authority. The family or carers are responsible for securing and maintaining housing.

- Section 17 payments will not be used to discharge regular and on-going payments to meet housing costs, these should be met through families own resources or housing benefits. In exceptional circumstances consideration to meeting interim housing costs and deposits on accommodation will be given when all the following criteria will need to be met:

  o Discussion has taken place with the relevant housing authority and it is evident it is not the relevant housing authorities responsibility.
  o The family do not have any money or assets.
  o It can be clearly demonstrated that no alternative accommodation for the child(ren) is available from the extended family and a rent deposit would prevent a child being looked after.
  o Upon completion of the tenancy the deposit should be reclaimed.
  o Rent guarantees under Section 17 are not offered by Stockport Family except in exceptional circumstances.

- Guidance on how to respond to claims of intentional homelessness is available from Stockport Homes.

- In all intentional homeless cases please consult with your Service Manager before financial decisions are taken on support with housing associated costs.

4.4. Provision of support to families with no recourse to public funds.

- To be eligible for care services from a local authority in the UK, including accommodation and financial support, an individual with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) must be:

  o An adult, including adults with responsibility for children.
  o Ordinarily resident in the local authority area.
  o Assessed as having community care or mental health needs under the National Assistance Act 1948, or
  o Be someone whom there is a duty to support under the Children Act 1989.
  o Eligible for support under immigration law: or
  o Someone who has to be supported to prevent a breach of their human rights, under the European Convention on Human Rights.
• In all NRPF cases consultation must take place with your Service Manager before financial decisions are taken on support with housing associated costs. Legal advice must be sought.

4.5. Support for “Friends and Family” caring for children assessed as being in need.

• These are set out in Family and Friends Care Policy.

• If needed set-up money e.g. new bed/clothes will be provided. Financial assistance, for subsistence, provided at £5 per child per day until benefits are in place. A maximum of 4 weeks will be paid.

• A template letter to assist carers in claiming entitled benefits is available at Appendix 2.

• Educational expenses are not met by Social Care and schools/VST should be approached about the use of the Pupil Premium.

• After school and holiday activities will only be supported if part of a Child Protection Plan, or of preventing the need to accommodate. Preferably free activities available locally should be identified.

• Cost for family trips/holidays will not be met.

4.6. Arrangements when children move to Stockport and are in receipt of Section 17 support from originating authority.

• Stockport requires formal written notification from the originating authority of a transfer of a child or family that they consider need on-going support under Section 17.

• An assessment of the family will be carried out within 28 days to consider if they meet the threshold for services. During the 28 day period the transferring authority must retain responsibility. Stockport will review any services or financial support being provided by the transferring authority, however Stockport is not obliged to continue this service.

• Before assistance is offered under Section 17 (6) it is expected that families will have maximised their income from other sources. This could include benefit maximisation, as well as assistance from charitable agencies and child support payments where relevant.
5. **Process for making payments.**

5.1. **Payments**

- Payments will be made by the Bank Automated Clearing Systems (BACS) – directly into a Bank or Building Society account where appropriate.

- Payments are paid weekly in arrears, based on the information supplied by the child’s social worker.

5.2. **Remittance Slips**

- The remittance slips give information about the payments and will be sent to payee’s home address.

- The Finance Team can be contacted on 0161 474 6700 Monday to Friday, between 09:00 hrs and 16:15 hrs.

- Any queries concerning the child(ren) should be referred to the child’s social worker at the locality office.

- Any change in circumstances, that will affect payments, will need to be reported immediately to the child’s social worker who in turn is obliged to inform the finance team to avoid any overpayments.

5.3. **Overpayments**

- It is corporate policy that any overpayments are reclaimed, even when the overpayment is our error. Arrangements will be made between the Finance Business Hub and carer for repayments that are seen as fair and reasonable, and fit the individual circumstances.
6. Financial Checklist

- Payments below £35 must have the approval of a Team Manager and payments above £35 must have the approval of a Service Leader.

- All of the following should be considered by the Social Worker when making a request for payment;
  
  - Is the payment legal and within these Departmental Guidelines?
  - Have all options been investigated?
  - Which method of payment is the safest/most appropriate?
  - Is it the most economical option?
  - Is the Section 17 budget the correct one to use?

The Team Manager should always be consulted before a payment is made. However if the Authorising Officer is unavailable this should not hold up payments that are urgent, relatively small or straightforward. The following test should be applied:

- *Is the child in need?*
- *Can any other agency assist?*
- *Is the request an appropriate use of Section 17?*
- *Have any other payments been made recently?*
- *What is the most appropriate means of meeting the need?*  
  (loan, cash, grant, voucher, goods in kind etc.)
- *Have you got Team manager approval?*
Section 17 (Children Act 1989) Support to Children
Application Process

1. Request for Support
   - Social Worker Assesses Request
2. Does the Client Need Food?
   - Yes: Social Worker Provides Food Voucher
   - No: Social Worker Checks
3. Social Worker Checks
   - Has the Client Contacted SLAS?
   - Has the Client Contacted DWP for Benefit Crisis Loan?
4. SLAS Request Rejected or Not Meeting Applicant Need?
   - Yes: Social Worker Refers Client to Relevant Service
   - No: SLAS / Benefit Request Made?
5. Finance Hub Checks
   - SLAS System
   - DWP Systems
   - Previous Requests
6. Application Form
   - Social Worker Completes Application with Client
7. Declaration
   - Client Agrees to Sign the Application Declaration
8. Social Worker Submits Application to the Finance Hub
   - Finance Hub Hub Checks
9. Finance Hub Seek Approval
   - Team Manager (0-£35)
   - Service Manager (£35+)
10. Approval Decision
    - Has Financial Assistance Been Approved?
11. Social Worker to Advise Client of Outcome
12. Scanning: Application Sent for Scanning to Client Record

Key:
- Client
- Social Worker
- Finance Hub
- Manager
## About this form

Support provided under this provision is made to children and families according to need. Assistance will only be given if all alternative avenues of support have been exhausted. Stockport Family will ensure that you are claiming all entitled benefits and will work with our partners to provide appropriate advice and guidance.

Partnership working with Welfare Rights, SLAS and DWP will assist us in determining a support package that meets your child/children’s needs.

Once assessed you will be contacted by the Finance Hub with the Managers Decision. We may refuse your request if we can signpost you to a more relevant service.

### What will I need to complete before making a claim

### Before proceeding with this application you must have:

1. If entitled, submitted a claim with Stockport Local Assistance Scheme (SLAS). SLAS can be contacted on 0161 474 2101 or by emailing slas@stockport.gov.uk.
2. Contacted the DWP on 0345 604 3719 if you require assistance with benefit entitlements, short term benefit advances and hardship payments. You can use the 0845 code to call this 0345 number. Check with your phone company which code is cheaper for you.

### Applicant

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Contact Number</th>
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| Names of Children
|-------------------|

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<th>EIS Number</th>
<th>Name of Child/Children</th>
<th>Date of Birth</th>
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**Stockport Local Assistance Scheme/Department for Work & Pensions**

If you have applied to the Stockport Local Assistance Scheme and been rejected please state:

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<th>Date of Claim</th>
<th>SLAS Reference Number</th>
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If you have applied to DWP for any benefits please state:

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<th>Type of Benefit applied for</th>
<th>Date of submission</th>
<th>Reference number</th>
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**About your benefits:**

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<th></th>
<th>Universal Credit</th>
<th>Jobseeker Allowance</th>
<th>Income Support</th>
<th>Personal Independence Payment</th>
<th>Disability Living Allowance</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<td>Do you receive any of the following?</td>
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<td>How often is the benefit paid?</td>
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<td>How much benefit is paid?</td>
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<td>When will the next payment be made?</td>
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| Do you receive any other benefits? | |

**Type of Assistance Requested**


**Reason for Request**


Declaration and consent

Before submitting this claim you are agreeing to the following declaration and consents. Please ensure that you have read this carefully before submitting your claim.

I understand that:

I am consenting to the Finance Support Hub holding and retaining information about me that is relevant to my application.

I am authorising the Finance Support Hub to act on my behalf. I am consenting to them making contact with third parties and I understand that information about me held by the Finance Support Hub may be disclosed to third parties as appropriate.

I am authorising third parties to co-operate with the Finance Support Hub and authorising them to provide any relevant information that they may request to support my application for support.

I am consenting to my information being passed on to appropriate advice, housing and support services to enable me to get the right support and help.

The advice, housing and support services may also need to obtain additional information to make sure that the best service is provided and I give my consent for this.

If I am making this application on someone else’s behalf I do so either with their consent or because I consider it to be in their best interests to make this application.

I have read, or had read to me and understand the information on this form.

I/we declare that the information I/we have given on this form is correct and complete to the best of my/our knowledge.

Signed:  
Print name:  
Date:  

Created by K Taylor  
Version 1.1 – 01 Feb 17
## Finance – SLAS/DWP systems check

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<th>Previous assistance given:</th>
<th>Dates:</th>
<th>Assistance given/Value</th>
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### Service Manager Approval

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<th>Accept/ Reject</th>
<th>Signature:</th>
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<td>Support Approved:</td>
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**Managers Decision:**

One Off/Contribution/For a period of time/Value

SW Action Plan/Referrals required

**Reason for rejection:**


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<th>Finance Support Hub</th>
<th>Actioned By:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
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Appendix 2 – Template Letter to support claiming CB & CTC

Services to People
Children’s Social Care Services

To whom it may concern

RE: Name of Carer & Address

On (Date) (Name of Child/ren) was/were placed with (Name of Carers) at (Address) due to (Explain circumstances for placement – Hospitalisation of parents etc).

This letter is to support (Name of carer)s application for Child Benefit(CB) and Children’s Tax Credits in respect of (name of child).

Since (Date of placement) (name of carers) have been financially supported by the Local Authority.

Should you require any further information regarding the processing of this claim please contact (Name and contact details of Social Worker)

Regards

Name of Social Worker
Address
Contact Details
Appendix 3 – List of Charitable Organisations

Stockport Local Assistance Scheme (SLAS)
Fred Perry House – Edward Street, Stockport SK1 3XE

Stockport Homes – Penny Pantry
Adswood & Bridgehall – 5 Cuddington Crescent, Bridgehall, Stockport SK3 8LX
Brinnington – First House, 367 Brinnington Road, Brinnington SK5 8EN
Mottram Street – Mottram Towers, Mottram Fold, Stockport SK1 3NY
Penny Lane – Hanover Towers, Lancashire Hill, Penny Lane, Stockport SK5 7RJ

Food Banks
Trussel Trust - Hazel Grove Baptist Church, Station Street, Hazel Grove, Stockport SK7 4EX
Chelwood – Chelwood Baptist Church, Adswood Road, Cheadle Hulme, Stockport SK8 5QA

Furniture Station
Hazel Grove Baptist Church, Station Street, Hazel Grove, Stockport SK7 4EX

Fuel Bank
Trussel Trust - Hazel Grove Baptist Church, Station Street, Hazel Grove, Stockport SK7 4EX

GLO Church – The Garage
GLO Central, 20 Hexham Close, Stockport SK2 5PR