

LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON

FINANCIAL PROVISION FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS 2016

Introduction

This document has been produced in accordance with the provisions of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 which aims :

- To ensure that corporate parenting plays a prominent role throughout the process of leaving care and that the local authority behaves in the manner of a good parent in assisting looked after young people in the transition to adulthood.
- To ensure that young people receive comprehensive support in all aspects of their lives once they have left care to the age of 21 years (or longer if in continuing education).

In particular, this will provide:

- Accommodation and maintenance for young people who have left care aged 16 and 17 years.
- General assistance for care leavers up to the age of 21 years.
- Help with employment up to the age of 21 years.
- Help with education and training to the end of an agreed programme.
- *Provision of vacation accommodation for care leavers in Higher Education or Further Education residential courses.*

Provision

This provision applies to Looked After Children and Care Leavers who are living independently or semi independently and where there are no placement funds to cover necessary costs. The provision outlined is not available to looked after young people living in foster placements or community homes where there are allocated budgets to cover costs.

1. Student Support

- 1.1 For care leavers in full time Further Education (and LAC in semi-independent) and other recognised education and training courses it is expected that their budget will reflect the amounts below:

Food	£30.00
College lunches	£17.50
Clothes	£ 7.50
Toiletries/cleaning materials	£ 5.00
Leisure	£10.00
Utilities (where applicable)	£12.00
Water rates [where applicable]	£3.00
Rent (where applicable)	Variable
Travel to college	Variable
Books/Educational equipment	Variable
Particular needs (e.g. health, hair care etc.)	Variable

TOTAL **£85**
Plus variable costs

Please note that those in receipt of income support will have this allowance included in this budget eg. £85.00 minus £57.90. Therefore the maximum payment from social care to a young person in receipt of benefit and in full time education will be £27.10 (excluding travel costs).

A full time course will be defined as one with 12 hours or more teaching time and these allowances will not be available where placement allowances e.g. in foster care or community homes will cover these costs.

- 1.2 Students will be able to undertake part time work and receive college bursaries without any reduction in education allowances outlined above.
- 1.3 **FE students aged 18 plus will be expected to claim Income Support and Housing Benefit** (where the course had started before their 21st birthday and is 12 hrs per week or more) which will be 'topped up' to the amounts identified above. Students studying more than 21 hrs per week (or 12 hrs per week or more if studying up to A level and aged under 20) will be expected to claim Council Tax benefit.
- 1.4 FE students should apply to their college for discretionary and bursary funds to cover the costs of necessary equipment, activities and registration/student union fees. Charitable applications should also be considered where additional or specific needs are identified.

Where access funds are not available, costs for essential equipment and essential college trips will be provided for in addition to the allowances at 1.1.

- 1.5 Reduced travel costs will be accessed where available.
- 1.6 Child care costs are generally not available from London Borough of Merton to support learning unless government funding is available via Care to Learn, Student Finance for HE students, NHS bursaries or via subsidised college crèches. Cases will be considered on an individual basis following discussion with social worker and manager.
- 1.7 Where young people are undertaking an apprenticeship or similar, a level of 'top up' will be payable where the apprenticeship is full time to ensure that young people receive at least £150 (after tax) per week. (Subject to financial assessment from 14+ team Income Maximisation Officer).
- 1.8 Where financial assistance is provided, attendance and progress will be carefully monitored through contact with relevant college staff by the case holding worker to ensure that expenditure is justified and that the student is making the best use of the opportunities provided.

Where a student is failing to fully attend a course, allowances will be withdrawn or reduced.
- 1.9 For students on a low income but not claiming benefits, an HCI form will be completed for free/reduced health charges.
- 1.10 Education allowances [minus payment for college lunches and any additional travel costs over the cost of a local weekly bus pass] will be paid during college holiday periods, including the summer vacation, where the young person will be continuing studies the following academic year. Young people who complete courses of education in the summer term will be expected to find employment or apply for benefits.
- 1.11 In exceptional circumstances an incentive bonus of up to £3 per hour of teaching time will be considered for students undertaking part time study. Any payments should not exceed the amount of income a young person would receive when undertaking full time study.
- 1.12 Allowances for young people in Higher Education can be found at Appendix 2.
- 1.13 Where students in Higher Education and those in Further Education residential courses are studying outside their home area, the costs of accommodation during holiday periods will be covered.
- 1.14 Allowances will not be available in advance except for planned trips away. Failure to budget will be covered by the policy outlined at 2.8.
- 1.15 Students undertaking a college based course of more than 12 hrs per week will be provided with a laptop or access to PC and internet.

- 1.16 Where it has been agreed that young people for whom the service has previously ended can return for education or training support (up to their 25th birthday) , they will receive allowances in line with the above as specified in last Pathway Plan.

2. Unemployed Care Leavers (and additional allowances)

- 2.1 There will be a variety of reasons why individual care leavers are not actively engaged in education, training or employment. Each circumstance will be unique and some discretion will therefore need to be applied, but the following basic principles will apply.

- 2.2 In circumstances where a care leaver is under 18 yrs and able to work but chooses not to, an allowance in line with benefit payments will be made where benefit is not payable. An HCI form should be completed for free/reduced health charges.

Additional payments will be considered to provide for necessary health needs.

- 2.3 A local bus pass will be provided to enable the young person to seek employment. This may be withdrawn in circumstances where it is evident that s/he is not doing so.

- 2.4 Assistance will be given to provide for clothing required for interviews and for necessary equipment for work.

Amounts for interview clothing are:

Trousers / skirt	£25
Shirt	£15
Tie	£10
Shoes	£35
Suit (according to need)	£150

- 2.5 For those young people in custody or receiving compulsory hospital treatment, a 'pocket money' allowance of up to £10 per week will be agreed with the relevant establishment.

- 2.6 Care leavers aged 18 + and not employed will be expected to apply for Job Seekers Allowance (unless other benefits apply). Benefit level support will be provided to young people awaiting their first benefit payment. Where this is the case, young people will be expected to repay backdated benefit payments on receipt and should sign an agreement to do so before receiving the first payment and give their consent for the 14+ team to track progress of the benefit claims.

- 2.7 Young people will be expected to begin the process of applying for benefits within a week of their 18th birthdays. Where young people fail to do so, financial support will be reduced to £4.00 per day for two weeks, and up to a maximum of £4.00 in kind (food purchases) thereafter.

- 2.8 Young People who default on requirements made by the DWP, lose money or experience difficulties in budgeting and who effectively find themselves destitute will be expected to seek assistance from the DWP or Local Assistance Scheme where relevant. Where this is refused, a discretionary payment to a maximum of £4.00 per day in kind

will be made to ensure that the young person has access to food until their next payment is due. Assistance will usually be given on a day to day basis.

- 2.9 Unemployed young people who subsequently find work should apply for extended Housing and Council Tax Benefit (applies for a four week period).
- 2.10 Young people who begin employment will receive an allowance equivalent to benefit rates until they receive their first salary payment.
- 2.11 Where young people do not own a mobile phone, one low cost phone (eg.£10) will be provided.
- 2.12 Young people will be provided with one suitcase. Additional storage for moving accommodation may be provided by way of boxes and / or laundry bags.
- 2.13 The costs of documents associated with 'citizenship ' – birth certificates, driving licences, passports and British Citizenship costs – for young people and their children will be covered. The cost of either a passport stamp or a travel document will be covered for young people with Discretionary Leave.
- 2.14 Additional travel costs to visit family and ex carers will be considered.

3. Accommodation

- 3.1 Foster carers providing accommodation and support to young people who have left care will receive allowances in line with those outlined in the Staying Put Policy document. This will be in addition to any allowances paid to the young person and represents a payment for rent, utilities and support.
- 3.2 Rent in advance and deposits for private sector accommodation will be paid where it is considered that this will be appropriate accommodation for young people and where the rent would be affordable for a working young person. A Pre Tenancy Determination should be requested to ensure the rent will be covered by HB in the event of the young person claiming benefits. Rents will need to fall within the Shared Room Rate regulations.

The exemption of care leavers (under 22 yrs) from the Shared Room Rate regulations should be quoted in the event of Housing Benefit claims (and particularly for Pre Tenancy Determinations).

4. Setting Up Home Allowance (SUHA)

- 4.1 The Setting Up Home Allowance (outlined at Appendix 1) is available to young people between their 16th and 21st birthdays (or when the service ends where the young people are in continuing education).

- 4.2 The grant will be provided according to need at any given time up to the maximum amount (see Appendix 1). The grant will not be provided where young people do not need the items listed in the appendix.

Cash balances of unspent Setting Up Home Allowances will not be available to young people where equipment is not needed.

- 4.3 Young people will, in the first instance and where relevant, be assisted to apply for LWSS (Local Welfare Support Scheme)

Where this is payable, the Leaving Care Grant will 'top up' the LWSS to the specified amount.

- 4.4 Payment for individual items listed at Appendix 1 should not exceed the listed cost without an equal saving on another purchase.

Additional items (i.e. any not listed at Appendix 1) should not be purchased without the agreement of the relevant line manager.

- 4.5 Circumstances may arise where it will be reasonable to pay Setting Up Home Allowances beyond 21 years or after the service ends. Any agreements will be made by the relevant line manager and recorded on the young person's file.

- 4.6 The Setting Up Home Allowance will be reviewed annually.

- 4.7 Replacement items in the event of breakage or wear and tear will not be available.

5. Birthday Allowance

- 5.1 A birthday allowance will be payable to all children in care and care leavers who are living in supported accommodation or independently.

The amounts available are as follows:

16 th	£25
17 th	£25
18 th	£50
19 th	£25
20 th	£25
21 st	£50
22 +	£25

6. Care leavers who are / expecting to be parents

- 6.1 Looked after young people aged 16 and 17 who become parents will be eligible for state benefits regardless of their looked after status or placement from the date of the child's birth, with the exception of Housing Benefit.

- 6.2 Benefit level allowances will be payable for the period of time the benefit claim is being processed, from the date of the child's birth.

In addition, an amount equivalent to the maternity grant (for the first child only) will be made available prior to the birth in order for the young person to purchase necessary equipment. Young people receiving money in these circumstances will be expected to repay the amount as they are subsequently able to claim the maternity grant after the child's birth. Young people should sign an agreement to repay before receiving any finance.

- 6.5 'Former relevant' young people – that is, those that are aged 18 – 21 yrs and have previously been an 'Eligible' child – will be entitled to claim Income Support eleven weeks prior to the due date of child and the Sure Start maternity grant if not employed.

Young people who are 'Former Relevant' and employed will receive the equivalent of the maternity grant from the 14+ Team.

- 6.6 During pregnancy, young people will receive an additional allowance of up to £150 for maternity clothing.
- 6.7 The cost of a bed for young people's children will be covered where there is no other source of funding available.

7. Eligibility for Financial Provision

The financial provision outlined above will apply to those Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant young people eligible for a service under the provisions of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the Children and Young Persons Act 2008.

APPENDIX 1

SETTING UP HOME ALLOWANCE

The following items are included as necessary items for equipping accommodation and provided (according to need) through the Setting Up Home Allowance. Reasonable removal costs will also be covered.

Bedroom

	Amount Available	Actual Cost
Bed/bed settee	£250.00	
Bedding	£60.00	
Wardrobe	£80.00	
Chest Drawers	£40.00	
Lamp	£8.00	
Sub Total	£438.00	
Kitchen		
Cooker and Installation	£350.00	
Fridge	£150.00	
Saucepans / frying pan	£30.00	
Cutlery	£10.00	
Plates / dishes / mugs	£25.00	
Iron / Board	£20.00	
Glasses	£10.00	
Wastebin	£10.00	
Kettle	£15.00	
Kitchen Utensils	£20.00	
Toaster	£ 10.00	
Microwave	£ 30.00	
Table / Chairs	£ 60.00	
Sub Total	£740.00	

Lounge

	Available Amount	Actual Amount
Sofa	£250.00	
Television	£150.00	
Shelving/Units/Coffee Table	£ 50.00	
Sub Total	£450.00	
Bathroom		
Mirror	£ 10.00	
Bath Mat	£ 10.00	
Towels	£ 20.00	
Shower Curtain	£ 10.00	
Laundry Basket	£ 8.00	
Toilet Roll Holder/Brush	£ 10.00	
Clothes Airer	£ 8.00	
Sub Total	£76.00	
General		
Washing machine/plumbing in	£200.00	
Vacuum Cleaner	£ 50.00	
Decorating materials (when needed)	£ 50.00	
Carpets - up to £8.50 per sq metre + fitting		
Curtains – up to £50 per window incl fixtures		
Sub Total	£300.00	
Total	£2004.00	
+ carpets / curtains		

Appendix 2

FINANCIAL CALCULATION FOR STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

2014 – 15

WHAT WILL THE 14+ TEAM PROVIDE?

Student Finance applications should be completed by **30 April 2016** to ensure that finance is available at the start of the first term

On the 'Application for Student Finance application students should apply for the full amount of the following :

- Maintenance Loan
- Tuition Fee Loan
- Maintenance Grant

Students should also complete other sections of the application identifying themselves as a care leaver.

Students should also apply for the Disabled Students Grant and Child Care grant where appropriate.

It is very important that students look at their chosen University and apply for bursaries or scholarships where they exist. Every University is different and many offer significant practical and financial support to care leavers.

Students in Higher Education will receive a bursary of £500 per term (Payable at the beginning of each term). A payment of £750 will be made to each student at the beginning of the summer break. Total per year £2250.

All prospective HE students should receive a financial assessment for 14+ Income Maximisation Officers.

