

# Financial Support for Care Leavers

A guide for Care Leavers: Financial Support you are entitled to.

As a corporate parent MKC has a duty to provide financial support to young people who are in care and leaving care.

## 1. Introduction

This guide is aimed for all young people aged 16 plus who are in or leaving care in Milton Keynes. It is an explanation of the financial support that you are entitled to as a care leaver.

We recognise that as a care leaver you may at times be disadvantaged and may not have the same opportunities as other young people. We therefore want to ensure you are provided with the support, advice and assistance that will enable you to reach your full potential becoming a responsible, independent and well-rounded individual that will inspire others.

Your future is important to us and we are committed to providing a positive parenting role to you. We therefore want to ensure that you have accommodation that is suitable for your needs, you have access to the right education, training or employment, you are fit and well and have happy positive relationships with others and have the independent skills to live life to the full.

Your Personal Advisor will be on hand to assist you in all aspects of your life and will support you in making the right choices to get you where you want and need to be. All financial payments made are dependent on the Care Leavers engagement with their Personal Advisor. We want to support you in the best possible way we can and engagement with your Personal Advisor and in the preparation of a multi-agency Pathway Plan is pivotal to this.

## 2. WHO IS ENTITLED TO SUPPORT AND WHAT THE LAW SAYS?

There are four categories of care leavers:

### 1. Eligible child:

If you are aged between 16 and 18 years old you and still a looked after child by Milton Keynes Council and have been in care for more than 13 weeks which began after your 14<sup>th</sup> birthday, we will be providing you with accommodation, support including financial help, accommodation, education, maintaining contact with family and friends, access to health and helping you to prepare for independence at 18. If you are looked after you will have an allocated Social Worker who will complete an assessment of your needs and a Pathway Plan with you.

**You are an Eligible Child if:**

- You are aged 16 or 17; and
- You are currently a child in care; and
- You have been in care for a period of 13 weeks (or periods amounting to 13 weeks) which began after.

## 2. Relevant Care Leaver:

You don't have to leave care when you are 16, but if you have chosen to leave care you will still be entitled to support as a relevant care leaver, if you have been an eligible child (see above). You will be supported in the same way if you were looked after, but will be allocated to a Personal Advisor who will work with you to assess your needs and formulate a Pathway Plan with you. Milton Keynes council will still provide you with accommodation (if you need it) and depending on your needs financial support.

If you have not been in care for a period of 6 months as you returned to live with your parents you will qualify for advice and assistance (see below).

### **You are a Relevant Care Leaver if:**

- You are no longer being cared for by the Local Authority but you have been 'Eligible' and;
- You are 16 or 17 years old you reached 14 years old, and must include at least 1 day whilst you were 16 or 17 years old.

## 3. Former Relevant Care:

You will now be 18 and have previously been a looked after child (eligible child). You will receive support from a Personal Advisor who will continue to work with you up until the age of 25 years. Your personal advisor will keep in touch with you at least every 8 weeks, unless you tell us that this doesn't suit you and we will then agree with you a suitable timeframe to meet with you. Your Personal Advisor will keep your Pathway Plan under review and meet with you every 6 months to hold a review or sooner if you think is needed. You will receive ongoing advice and support from your Personal Advisor in respect of accommodation, education, training and employment, keeping yourself healthy physically and mentally, maintaining important relationships and developing independent skills.

### **You are a Former Relevant Care Leaver if:**

- You are aged between 18 and 21, and before you reached 18 you were or had been a 'Relevant Care Leaver or;
- Before you stopped being looked after you were an Eligible Child.
- At age 21, or before age 25 you continue to be in full time education and/or training. You will remain a Former Relevant Care Leaver until the end of the agreed programme.

## 4. Qualifying for advice and assistance:

You may not have been in care for some time, because you may have been living with family or friends under a Special Guardianship Order or returned to live with parents.

### **You are a Qualifying Care Leaver if:**

- You are aged at least 16 but under 21 and;
- You were a cared for young person prior to the making of a Special Guardianship Order which was in force when you reached 18 or;
- If at any time after you reached the age of 16, but while you were still a cared for child, you were no longer looked after, accommodated or;
- You were privately fostered and assessed to be in need
- As a Qualifying Care Leaver you are able to access advice and assistance based on an needs assessment carried out by the Leaving Care Team.

### 3. ACCOMMODATION AND WHAT OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE TO YOU

If you are 16 and still a looked after child you may be either living with your foster parents, in a residential children's home, in semi-independent living or in another specialist provision or at home. Your social worker will talk to you about what future placement options are available to you to ensure a smooth transition in line with your Pathway Plan. We want to be able to plan in advance with you to ensure you are prepared and ready for that all important transition to adulthood.

Planning for housing starts early, your Personal Advisor will support you to register with Milton Keynes Council Housing because as a care leaver you have a priority need and will have Band 1 status. There will be a range of housing options available to you that will include the following;

- If you have been in your foster placement for a year or more and would like to remain, you could continue to live with them in consultation with your carer in a '**staying put arrangement**'.
- **Supported lodgings**, this is similar to foster care, but you would be expected to be more independent in your life skills and be in education, training or employment.
- **Semi-independent** accommodation –you will have your own furnished room, but would share a kitchen and bathroom facilities with other young people. We have various options available locally in Milton Keynes.
- **YMCA** – you can be referred to the YMCA, they will complete an assessment to identify whether you meet their criteria. There is a 3 tiered housing programme at the YMCA and all young people moving in will be placed in the high needs block when they first move in. The pathway into the more independent stages will depend on your ability to manage your independence.
- Find your **own accommodation**, either in a shared house or living with friends.
- If you plan to go to university you may wish to live in **Halls of Residence** in your first year and seek shared accommodation in subsequent years.

Whatever you choose to do, your Social Worker and PA will support you with the plan to ensure a smooth transition to the next stage in adulthood.

We will work with you to ensure you have somewhere suitable to live that is affordable to you. See the table below for details about how accommodation is paid for.

#### How will your accommodation be paid:

Age	Arrangement for payment
16 years and still looked after	Milton Keynes Council will pay for your accommodation whilst you are looked after child.
18 +	You will claim Housing Benefit to cover the cost of your rent.

18+ but no recourse to public funds

Milton Keynes will continue to pay for your accommodation until a decision is made about your immigration status.

### **Financial support with accommodation moving into adulthood:**

Setting up home for the first time can be a daunting task and expensive which is why we offer you a helping hand to ensure you have those basic essentials. Setting up Home allowance (based on an assessment of need and what you require). Available for young people up to the age of 25.

Spend of the SUHA will be supervised by your Personal Advisor and agreed as part of your Pathway Planning in line with Manager's authorisation.

The setting up home allowance includes:

**£1500** - This must include essential items including up to £200 on a TV, basic household items for kitchen, sofa, fridge, washing machine, cooker and kitchen essentials, curtains, carpets, etc.

**£500** - This is protected spends and will only include contents insurance, TV license, removal costs, appliance connection costs & Health and Safety items

You may need support with initial deposit or first months' rent. Some young people can access Local Welfare Provision or Discretionary Housing Benefit if you are accessing Housing Benefit or Universal Credit. You can apply via Milton Keynes Council website and your PA will support you with this. A needs assessment will be completed and your current financial situation will be assessed as part of this.

Milton Keynes Council has made a pledge to all Care Leavers to pay their Council Tax until the age of 25 years. Your Personal Advisor will support you to ensure you are exempt from paying the tax to Milton Keynes Council. If you are living out of borough your Personal Advisor will make the payment for your Council to your local Council for you. However you will need to ensure you keep in touch with your Personal Advisor and inform them if your circumstances change.

## **4. LIVING ALLOWANCES**

### **16 – 17 year olds**

You will be expected to have a bank account. This will enable you to receive a salary from work or payments from us.

Age	Situation	Entitlement
16 to 18	Foster care and paid	Clothing allowance Birthday Allowance Pocket money Festival celebration allowance (All are in line with foster carer payment scheme)

16 to 18	Semi-independent care	£58:00 per week Young Persons Allowance when young person is expected to pay a service charge. £45:00 when no service charge is paid. Clothing allowance Birthday money Festival celebration
16 to 18	Supported lodgings and Staying Put placements	£45:00 per week Young Persons Allowance Clothing allowance Birthday money Festival celebration
16 to 18	Residential care	Paid by Milton Keynes Council clothing allowance Birthday Allowance Festival Allowance
16 to 18	Placed at home with parent on a Care Order	Parent claims relevant benefits. Needs based assessment to be completed if financial assistance is required.

## 18 – 21 year old

When you reach 18 you will be entitled to claim benefits or seek employment to support yourself independently.

MKC will only continue to financially support young people who have no recourse to public funds at Young Persons Allowance level.

Financial support outlined below will only be paid when a Care Leaver engages.

### Other financial support we will offer you:

Support type	Amount
Clothing Allowance	£21 per week up to the age of 18
Birthday 18 and 21	£100
Birthday 16 and 17	£50
Birthday 19 and 20	£50
Religious Festivals up until 21 years.	£50 per year
Driving lessons test including motorbike up until age of 21 years	Theory and practical test 5 lessons (Young Person must pay for 5 lessons) Cost of licence.
Passport/Travel Document	All Children in Care should have a passport, if they do not have one we will fund the first passport or travel document.

Birth Certificate	If we do not have your birth certificate then we will pay for a copy for you to have as an adult leaving care.
Leisure allowance	£5:00 per week up until the age of 19 years, to pay towards gym membership or swimming etc.
Bus Pass	To assist young people with independence we will provide a bus pass for local journeys to assist you with attending interviews, starting a new job etc. This will be provided for a short period of time and reviewed by your PA and will relate to your Pathway Plan.
Savings/Finances whilst you have been in care.	<p>If you have been in care for a long time then you may have been entitled to junior ISA, this money is held in trust by us through Share Foundation. Your social worker will ensure that you are provided with details of any funds in trust for you on your 18th birthday.</p> <p>Whilst you are in care we will save money on your behalf and this will be deposited in an account for you and given to you on your 18th birthday.</p>

## 5. EDUCATION TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

### Support with Education and Training:

On leaving year 11 you may choose to remain at school and complete A-levels or you may decide to enrol at college and complete a further education course. It is important that you know what financial support we will offer you and what you are entitled to whilst you are studying.

If you are studying further education, the college will provide you with a bursary, which is paid over the year. This covers the cost of travel arrangements to and from college, equipment (such as a laptop) and some colleges may provide you with food as part of this bursary. Check with your college to ensure you know how and what will be provided.

### Incentive payment:

If you secure employment/training/education when you have been out of Education/employment or training you will receive an incentive payment of £75.00, if maintained for 6 months a further £75.00 will be paid. This is available up until the age of 21 years.

### Higher Education:

If you decide to go to University we will support you with your first degree for up to 4 years. You will be entitled to a **bursary as a Care Leaver**, which is paid through the university. Each university has their own arrangements and funds.

MKC will provide you with a maximum contribution of £5000 per year to pay towards your accommodation. This is paid over the duration of the degree course, split into termly or monthly payments. If your accommodation cost is less than this amount for the year then we will pay the sum of your accommodation costs only.

Your Personal Advisor will support you with your education programme, providing advice and support jointly with the Virtual School. When you have the letter of acceptance from the University you have applied for your Personal advisor will make an application to the Employment, Education and Training Panel (EET Panel) for agreement of the payment. Agreed funding will be paid directly to the accommodation provider.

Care Leavers will need to sign an agreement for their Personal Advisors to liaise with and request updates from the University if they would like financial support towards their accommodation costs whilst they are at University. Requests for the allowance to the EET panel cannot be made without this agreement. Payments will only be paid upon the young person's engagement with their Personal Advisor which will form part of their Pathway Plan.

You may wish to refer to the following website: <http://propel.org.uk/UK/>, which is a comprehensive online resource for care leavers with information about the support available to them from universities and colleges in the UK.

## **6. APPRENTICESHIPS**

An apprenticeship is a way of earning and learning. You can begin an apprenticeship at 16 providing you are not in full time education and you are living in England. MKC offer apprenticeships to young people and would welcome applications from care leavers providing you meet the entry requirements for the role of your choice. You may want to look at training within a private company. There are many opportunities available as an apprenticeship.

Apprenticeships can take up to 5 years depending on the level you study at. The levels range from 1 to 7 from GCSE to Master's degree.

You will be paid a minimum wage and some companies may pay you above the minimum wage depending on the role you are working at.

You can find more information about apprenticeships from the Government website: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>

MKC Virtual School can be accessed via MKC website: <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/children-young-people-families/virtual-schools>. You can find information about what they offer to children in care and those leaving care in relation to education and training.

## **7. CARE LEAVERS WITH NO IMMIGRATION STATUS:**

If you arrived in the UK with no parent with parental responsibility and were assessed as in need of services and became a looked after child then you will be entitled to services as a looked after child until the age of 18 and care leaver support if the period of care exceeded 13 weeks.

If you have leave to remain then local authority will provide you with accommodation until you receive a decision from the Home Office. We will always look to provide you with

accommodation within Milton Keynes area. If you find that you have family living elsewhere in the UK and wish to live with them we will assess them to consider if this is appropriate for you, if it is you may no longer need to be a looked after child.

You will be provided with a maximum allowance of £58 per week if you are over 18, this is to be used for food, clothes, toiletries and activities.

Once you have a decision on your immigration status, you may be granted refugee status, which will mean you then have the right to work, continue with education and claim benefits it is at this point we will no longer offer you an allowance.

If your asylum application is refused MKC will complete a Human Rights Assessment and depending upon the outcome you may be transferred to Home Office as we will no longer have a duty to support you.

## **8. CARE LEAVERS WHO ARE DETAINED:**

If you have received a custodial sentence you will still be entitled to support as a care leaver and your Personal Advisor will arrange to visit you. The visit will ensure an assessment of your needs is completed and what financial support you are entitled to during your sentence.

Whilst detained you will be expected to take up and engage fully with training and education programme and earn money where possible.

If you are under 18 years old then you will be still entitled to birthday and festival money. Pocket money is payable at a rate of £5.00 per week or a lower amount if this exceeds the rules of the youth detention centre.

If you are between 18 – 21 years old, you will receive birthday and festival payments.

## **9. USEFUL CONTACTS**

[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

The latest news and information on benefits will be available on this national website. You can search for individual benefits and use the 'benefits adviser' interactive tool that can help you find out what benefits and tax credits you may be entitled to.

[www.leavingcare.org](http://www.leavingcare.org)

The latest news and information on all issues relating to transitions from care and care leavers are available on NCAS website.

[www.getreadyforadultlife.org](http://www.getreadyforadultlife.org)

This webpage for young people in or leaving care gives you information and advice to help prepare you for adult life.

### **Benefit Enquiry Line**

A telephone advice and information service you can call if you are sick or disabled or if you are caring for someone and acting on their behalf.

T: 0800 88 22 00

Textphone: 0800 24 33 55



**Citizens Advice Bureau**

Helps people resolve their legal, money and other problems by providing free advice.

T: 0870 84080808

E: [enquiry@cabline.org](mailto:enquiry@cabline.org)

W: [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

**Shelter housing advice helpline**

Shelter provides a free, national telephone advice line staffed by trained housing advisers.

T: 0808 800 4444 (8am—midnight 7 days per week, Freephone)

E: [info@shelter.org.uk](mailto:info@shelter.org.uk)

W: [www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)

**Turn2us**

Helps people access the money available to them — through welfare benefits, grants and other help.

T: 0808 802 2000 (Freephone)

W: [www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk)

**Voice**

A children's advocacy organisation for children living away from home or in need that provides a national helpline.

T: 0800 800 5792 (Freephone)

E: [help@voiceyp.org](mailto:help@voiceyp.org)

W: [www.voiceyp.org](http://www.voiceyp.org)

**Home Office**

E: [immigrationenforce@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:immigrationenforce@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk)

**Refugee Council**

If you are a child under 18 you can contact the Children's Section.

T: 020 7346 1134

**Barnardo's Young People - Milton Keynes**

Offer an Independent Visiting service for children up to the age of 18.

Address: Margaret Powell House, Floor 1 Suite 26, 401-447 Midsummer Boulevard, Milton Keynes, MK9 3BN

T: 01908 232006 / 07712403705

Available in audio, large print, braille and other languages