

# Care Experienced Young People's Financial Policy

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## Document Control

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Purpose: To set the protocol for financial support for care experienced young people in Milton Keynes.

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## Financial Policy for Milton Keynes' Care Experienced Young People

As corporate parents Milton Keynes City Council strive to ensure young people receive the best possible support as they plan to leave care and prepare for adult life.

Milton Keynes City Council want to make sure our care leavers feel, prepared, safe, supported and know where to get advice and assistance.

### Notes and Implementation Issues

1. All allowances must be based on an assessment of need and be set out in the young person's Pathway Plan. The Plan must also highlight any attached conditions, how payments will be made, the frequency of payments, when they will be reviewed and when they will cease.
2. Where possible, by the age of 16 all young people should have a National Insurance Number and relevant identity documents with photographic evidence to ensure they can register for housing, bank accounts, and claim welfare benefits in the future if needed.
3. Where possible, by the age of 14 all young people should have a bank account. Payment of any allowances to young people should be through their account. Some Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children may not be eligible for a bank account; in these instances, a Credit Union account should be sought or alternative payment methods such as pop vouchers.
4. It is a statutory requirement that allowances are index-linked, reviewed annually, and are aligned with annual welfare benefit increases.
5. Depending on an assessment of need, Qualifying Children may be entitled to the same level of support as Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant Children.
6. Young people (aged 16 & 17) living in fostering or residential placements will be covered by the allowances set out in the financial policy applying to foster care and residential care.
7. Children in care and care experienced young people who are also unaccompanied and separated children are entitled to the same allowances as any other looked after child or care experienced young person. However, allowances to this group of young people may be affected and limited because of their immigration status.
8. The allowances set out in this document apply to all young people who are deemed Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant and are dependent on an assessment of need and their legal and immigration status. All allowances can also be applied to Qualifying Children, subject to a full assessment of their circumstances and needs.

9. Wherever possible, VAT should be reclaimed on all purchases (that are VAT rated). A VAT receipt is required for all purchases made with a purchase card. When purchasing with all other payment methods a receipt with a VAT number is required for items up to £250.00 and a full VAT receipt is required for items over £250.00.
10. The headings used throughout this document are taken from the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 Guidance and the Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers Guidance and Regulations 2010, revised 2015 and 2022.

## Who is a Care Experienced Young Person?

There are different types of Care experienced young people depending on when and how long you have been in care; the following describes the 4 different categories:

- Eligible Child is a child aged 16 and 17 who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who is still being looked after. As an eligible child you will be allocated a Social Worker who will complete an assessment of your needs and a Pathway Plan with you, providing support with accommodation, education, contact with your family and help to prepare you for independence as an adult. You will also be allocated a Personal Advisor.
- Relevant Child is a child aged 16 and 17 who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who has left care. This also includes young people who were detained (e.g., in a youth offending institution or hospital) when they turned 16, but who were looked after immediately before being detained for a period of least 13 weeks which began after reaching the age of 14. If you have been in care as an eligible child you will continue to be supported in the same way but have an allocated Personal Advisor, instead of a Social Worker. If you have not been in care for a period of 6 months as you returned to live with your parents, you will still qualify as a Relevant child if these living arrangements break down before your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- Former Relevant Child is a young person over 18 who was previously 'Eligible' or 'Relevant'. You will be supported until aged 21, or longer to 25 years old if there is a need. As a former relevant Care Leaver, you will be allocated a Personal Advisor who will give you advice and support, and regularly update your Pathway Plan.
- Qualifying Child is any young person aged at least 16 but under 21 (or 24 if in education or training) who stops being looked after or accommodated in a variety of other settings, or being privately fostered, after the age of 16. This also includes young people who are under a special guardianship order. As a Qualifying Care Leaver, you will be able to access advice and guidance.

## Living with Parents

Young people that have returned to live with their parents may be entitled to receive the supplementary allowances detailed in this policy, depending on an assessment of need.

If it is considered that the young person requires extra financial assistance, the Social Worker or Personal Advisor (PA) would be expected to fully explore all benefit options for the young person and their parents (if appropriate) and other routes for funding. Any financial requests will need to be approved by the Team Manager.

In order to avoid any inequalities within the family, by the provision of leaving care financial support, an assessment must be undertaken regarding the need for supplementary allowances. For example, where there are children in the family who have not been looked after, it may be inappropriate to provide any allowances if these allowances create disparities, inequalities and potentially undermine parenting responsibilities.

The assessment of need applies to 'Former Relevant' and 'Qualifying' young people.

The level of the leaving care financial support should be based on an assessment of need and set out in the Pathway Plan.

## Care Order Revocations and Ceasing Financial Allowances

Where an 'Eligible' child has lived with a person with parental responsibility for at least 6 months and they cease to be looked after, due to the revocation of the Care Order, or Interim Care Order they become a 'Qualifying' child (a Qualifying child is a 16 to 21/24 year old subject to Section 24 of the Children Act 1989).

The six month period living with parents that is required to be deemed a Qualifying Child, can include time both prior to and after the revocation of the Care Order.

Welfare benefit legislation relating to 'Qualifying' children sets out that both parents and children are entitled to welfare benefits/tax credits/universal credit in their own right.

'Qualifying' Child status does not have any impact on either the child, or parents benefit or tax credit entitlements. Once a child is deemed a 'Qualifying' Child and following a financial re-assessment of their financial needs, the majority, if not all, of the leaving care financial support being provided should cease. The primary responsibility for meeting a 'Qualifying' Child's financial needs rests with the parent/s.

The detailed financial and practical arrangements to support the child and parent should be set out in the Pathway Plan. The level of the leaving care financial support should be based on an assessment of need and set out in the Pathway Plan.

## Young People Supported by Adult Services and Living in Supported Accommodation

Young people that are supported by Adults Services are entitled to all allowances that other 'Former Relevant' care experienced young people can access.

The Setting up Home Allowance is not transferable. If a young person does not need to access the Setting up Home Allowance but does require other equipment, this needs to be considered separately and presented to the Team Manager for consideration.

When exploring additional financial allowances, the individual circumstances of that young person need to be considered with their Adult Social Worker. Most young people over the age of 18 will contribute towards their care so extra allowances may have an impact on this.

The level of the leaving care financial support should be based on an assessment of need and set out in the Pathway Plan.

## Young People in Custody

If young people have received a custodial sentence they will still be entitled to support as a care leaver. The visit by a Social Worker or PA will ensure an assessment of needs is completed and will identify what financial support the young person is entitled to during their sentence.

Financial support for young people who are detained in custody is governed by the rules of the particular establishment they are detained in.

In general, young people are expected to undertake education or training and are provided with pocket money for engaging in these activities. Additionally, they will often be provided with clothing, or are able to bring clothing with them. As such they will not be provided with any allowances while detained.

If under 18 years old a young person will still be entitled to birthday and festival money. If someone is unable to earn money, and there is no remuneration /clothing provision at the individual institution, up to £5 per week may be provided to the young person aged 16 or 17 years of age and one-off clothing purchases up to £100 subject to a needs assessment.

For young people aged 18-21 and in exceptional circumstances where education, training or work opportunities are not available or appropriate and no pocket money or remuneration scheme exists, young people can be provided with up to £10 a week allowance. This needs to be based on an assessment of need and taking into account anything which may cause them to be placed in a vulnerable financial position. This will need to be authorised by the Team Manager.

Where family members are in receipt of welfare benefits, prison visits and contact can be facilitated by the 'Assisted Prison Visits Scheme' allowances provided by the DWP. Travel costs for family



members not in receipt of welfare benefits may be provided following an assessment of need and an assessment of the frequency.

It is important that the Social Worker and / or Personal Advisor include the prison keyworker when completing that assessment of need and if consented by the young person a Pathway plan should be reviewed with the prison keyworker also to ensure the young person's needs are being met.

## **Supplementary Allowances for Young People Aged Over 21**

Unless stated otherwise all of the allowances referred to in this policy are for young people aged 18-21. Please refer to the specific section on Financial Support for young people aged 21-25.

### **Young Persons Allowance**

For young people who are living in semi supported accommodation aged 16 and 17 years old, £10 will be deducted from their YPA (Young Persons Allowance) at source. This is to help them prepare for when they have their own tenancy, or an arrangement where they will be responsible for paying utility bills.

For young people between the ages of 16 and 17 years old and living in either foster care or a regulated Children's home allowances or pocket money will be stipulated by the provider. This should be discussed at the initial placement planning meeting as well as Child Care reviews. Details of allowances / pocket money agreed should be clearly documented in pathway plans alongside evidence of savings made for the young person to access at 18.

### **Young Persons Allowance and Initial Benefit Claim**

Maintenance and accommodation costs should be met by the young person from their employment or benefits from their 18th birthday.

If a young person will be claiming benefits from their 18th birthday, this process should start 4 weeks prior to their 18th birthday. In most cases there will no longer be new claims for Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance (income related), Jobseekers Allowance (income related), Child Tax Credit/Working Tax Credit and Housing Benefit. Universal Credit will replace all new claims for the above benefits.

Supporting information and identity documents should be obtained prior to a young person's 18th birthday.

Based on an assessment of need Milton Keynes City Council can provide up to five weeks Young Persons Allowance whilst waiting for the Universal Credit payment to be made- whether this be for a claim when first turning 18 or from when initially transferring from a legacy benefit to Universal Credit.

This should only be set up on a week by week basis, as workers should be checking the progress of the claim.

The young person should be advised not to take an advance payment of Universal Credit as this is then deducted from on-going payments. If an advance payment has been given, then the young person will not be provided with any further Young Persons Allowance. The offer of the 5 weeks Young Persons Allowance is to prevent an advance payment and subsequent debt accruing.

If the young person has dependents or disabilities which means that they would suffer hardship by receiving the amounts below, an additional weekly amount can be paid.

Any requests of this nature need to be sent to the Team Manager for approval and will be based on the elements that relate to that person's circumstances. If the benefits are still not in payment after 5 weeks and the DWP cannot provide any assistance, please see Emergency Payments section.

Asylum seekers and 'all rights/appeals exhausted young people (ARE) with no recourse to public funds are provided with £45.00 in line with UKBA guidelines. A human rights assessment should be conducted to ascertain if financial support should continue alongside UKBA procedures.

## Young Persons Allowance amount

Age	Duration	Amount per week
16 – 17 years old living in semi-independent accommodation *£10 deducted for utility bills	Until 18 <sup>th</sup> Birthday	£57.41
18+	5 weeks	£67.41
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking young person aged 18+ not responsible for utility bills	Until immigration status confirmed	£57.41
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking young person who is appeal rights exhausted	Pending outcome of human rights assessment	£45

## Deposits and Rent in Advance

Where a young person has access to housing authority or housing association independent accommodation a deposit and rent in advance may be required.

In exceptional circumstances and depending on an assessment of need a deposit and rent in advance may be considered if a young person would be at risk of homelessness without this support. Where

young people are moving into private sector independent accommodation, workers should check if homeless prevention or discretionary housing payment (DHP) funding can be applied. Where needed, a deposit and rent in advance will be provided if the rent level falls within the given Local Housing Allowance rate for that area.

Personal Advisors should check if a 'Rent Deposit Scheme' or 'Bond Scheme' exists in the area the young person is aiming to live and/or what 'Rent Deposit Protect Scheme' the letting agent/landlord uses. Many local authority housing departments operate Deposit Guarantee Schemes that offers landlords a legally binding deposit bond in place of a cash deposit.

From April 2007, landlords and agents have, by law, had to sign up to one of three Government-backed schemes when they take a deposit. These schemes aim to ensure that letting agents, landlords and tenants have access to independent deposit protection. The Tenant Fees Act 2019 came into force on the 1st June 2019 and as result tenancy deposits are capped, and most fees charged in connection with a tenancy are banned. [Tenant Fees Act Guidance 2019](#).

Milton Keynes City Council cannot act as a guarantee for rented properties.

## Council Tax

Milton Keynes City Council has made a pledge to all Care Leavers to pay their Council Tax until the age of 25 years.

The Personal Advisor will support the young person to ensure they are exempt from paying the tax to Milton Keynes City Council.

If they are living out of borough their Personal Advisor will enquire to see if they are exempt from paying council tax in that area. However, they will need to ensure they keep in touch with their Personal Advisor and inform them if their circumstances change.

## Birthday Allowance

**Payable for 18<sup>th</sup> (£100.00) 19<sup>th</sup> (£50.00), 20<sup>th</sup> (£50.00) and 21<sup>st</sup> birthday (£100.00) towards a gift**

Depending on an assessment of need the birthday allowance can be used to purchase a gift or paid directly to the young person.

Alternatively, the allowance can be given to a previous foster carer/keyworker or Personal Advisor to purchase a gift/gifts or contribute towards the cost of a celebration. This can be discussed and agreed individually between the young person and Personal Advisor. All young people should receive a card.

Depending on an assessment of need it may be appropriate to take the young person out for a birthday celebration meal for their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. This is up to a maximum of £40.00.

Young people in custody on their birthday should all receive a birthday card. A birthday allowance of £25 can be provided for each of the above birthdays whilst the young person is in custody. The remaining amount that they would have been entitled to if not in custody, should be made available via guided spend upon release. This should be provided in consultation with the prison to ensure their regulations are adhered to and the young person is not placed in a vulnerable financial position.

The Birthday Allowance will only be paid to young people who remain in contact with Milton Keynes City Council or a commissioned support service and are actively engaged in the pathway planning process.

## **Festivals Allowance - £50**

This allowance will be paid to those who are 16 or 17 years old, living in semi-independent accommodation and former relevant young people aged 18-20 years old.

Young people living in foster care or a regulated children's home will receive a festival allowance through the provider.

Depending on an assessment of need the Christmas/festival allowance can be used to purchase a gift or paid directly to the young person. Alternatively, the allowance can be given to a previous foster carer/keyworker or Personal Advisor to purchase a gift/gifts or contribute towards the cost of a celebration. This can be discussed and agreed individually between the young person and Personal Advisor. All young people should receive a card.

Young people who are non-Christians will be given a choice as to when their festival allowance is to be provided. If they do not have a preference, the allowance should be made available at Christmas to ensure that they receive their entitlement. Additionally, they should also be offered the choice of having a proportion of their allowance at their festival of choice and a proportion at Christmas.

The Christmas/festival allowance will only be paid to young people who remain in contact with Milton Keynes City Council or a commissioned support service and are actively engaged in the pathway planning process.

## **EET (Education, Employment, Training) Incentive payments**

Young people who are entitled to the 16-19 bursary and who are undertaking a full time (minimum of 12 hours direct contact time) education/training course or an agreed activity in preparation for Education, Training or Employment.

When a young person gains and maintains Education, Employment or Training for a period of 3 weeks or more they will receive a financial incentive of £75. If they maintain the Education, Training or Employment for a further 3 months a further £75 will be paid. This is a one-off payment to celebrate the success.

If a young person is doing an apprenticeship which pays lower than the standard minimum wage for their age (this is often the case when an apprentice minimum wage is paid), then an EET incentive payment may be made depending on an assessment of income and expenditure. Please follow the link for further details: <https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates>.

The EET incentive will be paid term time only for those responsible for paying for their own food and where finances can be a barrier to Education Employment and Training.

Young people will be supported with initial travel costs to a place of Education, Employment or training (to include interview). Over time the expectation would be that the young person (18+) would be able to fund this travel cost independently. Work with the Personal Advisor will be completed to plan this. This plan is to be evidenced in the pathway plan.

Milton Keynes City Council will support a young person with the costs of Education, Employment, training, or interview clothing. This will be needs assessed and documented in the pathway plan.

Any extra payments that Milton Keynes City Council make would be disregarded for benefit purposes.

## Computer Grant, Further and Higher Education

Young people who are undertaking full time further or higher education courses are entitled to a grant to assist with stationery, educational visits, books and equipment, Computer and I.T. equipment – based on evidenced need.

- Stationery, Educational Visits Grant, Books and Equipment Grant up to a total of £350.00 per year.

The Grant is per academic year, is not transferable and is only available for stationery, educational visits, books, general equipment and I.T. equipment.

All young people entering further education or higher education will be assisted to access/purchase a tablet or lap-top (one-off for those aged 16 to 21), a computer grant of £300 will be considered. This allowance includes the provision of a home/student software package (word, excel, PowerPoint etc).

It is important that the Personal Advisor explores all other universal services for this funding in the first instance. The young person's commitment to the course will need to be evidenced prior to the provision of a computer grant.

In certain circumstances it may be more appropriate for a young person to access a tablet or to loan a laptop for a time limited period.

In exceptional circumstances, where the course of study requires more specialist IT equipment or a printer, further costs for IT equipment will be considered when there is evidence provided by the course tutor of this need to support the young person to successfully undertake their course of study. This is subject to a letter of supporting evidence and agreement by the Team Manager.

## Higher Education

### Student Finance

The level of fees, loans, grants, and bursaries for higher education student's change each academic year. The most accurate and up to date information is available via the following link: [Gov UK student finance guidance](#).

### Tuition Fees and Tuition Fee Loans:

For a young person attending university the PA will support with applying for student finance to cover tuition fees.

### Maintenance Loans

The maintenance loan is provided by Student Finance England and is paid directly to the student, normally in three instalments and is provided to help with living costs such as rent, food and bills.

The maximum maintenance loan in 2022-2023 for students starting courses after the 1st of August 2016 (per year) is set out below:

Students studying in London	£12,667.00
Students studying outside of London	£9,706.00
Students living at home	£8,171.00
Students studying overseas	£11,116.00

In the final year of the course the maximum loan rate is reduced by approximately 10%.

### Loan Repayment

Graduates repay the combined tuition fee and maintenance loan when they have finished studying and are earning over £25,000.00 per year. The monthly repayments are linked to the person's income. After a certain amount of time (30 years), any outstanding loans will be written off if the money has not been repaid. See full guidance at; [Gov UK repaying your student loan](#).

Interest: until the April after you finish or leave a course the interest rate is the Retail Price Index (RPI) plus 3%. From the April after you finish your course the interest will be based on income: £21,000 or less = RPI. Between £21,000 and £41,000 = RPI plus up to 3%, depending on your income. Over £41,000 = RPI plus 3%

### Support from Individual Universities

In addition to the financial support provided by Student Finance England, most Higher Education Institutions will offer their own financial support. Each university will have its own eligibility criteria and any awards may only be available to a limited number of students:

- Bursaries
- Scholarships
- Fee Waivers

Bursaries and Scholarships will generally not have to be repaid and Fee Waivers are applied to part, or all of the course costs.

## **Access to Learning Fund**

Most universities also have an 'Access to Learning Fund' which is available to students who are experiencing financial hardship. Some universities offer care leavers priority access to Access to Learner Funds. Sometimes known as Fair Access Funds. 'Propel' is hosted by the 'Become' Charity and sets out or links to the support (including financial support) that each higher education institution provides and includes a named contact at the majority of educational settings. [Propel support search.](#)

## **National Scholarship Programme (NSP)**

The National Scholarship Programme is designed to offer support to students from low income backgrounds. The NSP is funded jointly between the government and individual universities. Individual universities can make their own decisions as to who receives a National Scholarship. Some universities may offer care leavers priority access to the NSP. Support may be offered in a variety of ways including cash grants, reduced cost accommodation or a fee waiver. Any funds received from the NSP are non-repayable.

## **The Care Experienced Higher Education Bursary**

The Care Experienced Higher Education Bursary is provided by the student's local authority (Milton Keynes City Council) and is provided as a grant of £2,000.00 spread throughout the length of the whole course. This is provided for the first degree course only.

## **Grants and Awards from Charitable Trusts**

Trusts and charities provide financial grants and awards to students. Advice about what may be available is available through individual universities or through the Educational Grants Advisory Service (EGAS).

Public libraries should have directories of charitable trusts that provide grants and awards:

- The Educational Grants Directory
- The Charities Digest
- The Grants Register
- The Directory of Grant Making Trusts

## **General Information**

Care experienced young people considering attending university should check with the universities that they are thinking about applying to, for information about the support that each institution will provide. This information can then assist when making a final choice about which university to apply for as a first, second or third choice. The students' support service should be able to provide information on both the practical and financial support that may be available.

Information about additional support to care leavers can be found on the Access and Participation Plans that each institution is required to have. Information can be found on the web site of each institution or via: [Office for Students.](#)

## **Disabled students may be eligible for the Disabled Students' Allowance 2022 to 2023 academic year**

Undergraduate and postgraduate students can get up to £25,575 a year for support

[Help if you're a student with a learning difficulty, health problem or disability: Disabled Students' Allowance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/help-if-youre-a-student-with-a-learning-difficulty-health-problem-or-disability-disabled-students-allowance)

### **Local Authority Financial support**

Milton Keynes City Council - Higher Education Grant which includes the Government's Higher Education Bursary can be accessed once (for four years) at any point between a young person's 18th and 25th birthday.

All young people entering higher education are entitled to:

- A one off Computer Grant for a note-pad or lap-top depending on an assessment of need and if not previously accessed - £300.
- A Stationery Grant, Educational Visits and Books and Equipment Grant of up to £350.00 and does not include cost for a laptop/ computer

The Grant is per academic year (assessed each year), is not transferable and is only available for stationery, educational visits and books and equipment. Young people should submit a list of requirements regarding equipment, course books etc. and return receipts to their leaving care Personal Advisor.

1. A Higher Education Bursary of £2,000.00 which is provided over the period of a two, three or four year course. Depending on the length of the course the £2,000.00 per course will be constituted of £1,000.00 per year (two year course) H.E. Bursary, £666.67 per year (three year course) H. E. Bursary, £500.00 per year (four year course) H. E. Bursary.
2. A holiday Accommodation Allowance up to 22 weeks – Up to the level of the Local Housing Allowance one-bedroom self-contained rate and/or the level of university accommodation (in the holiday)
3. A Travel Grant to enable young people to get to and return to university (one return journey per academic year).

Young people applying to and undertaking higher education courses will be required to apply for all available universal student funding i.e. maintenance loans, tuition fee loans and individual establishment bursaries. These loans and grants and the H.E. Bursary should be used by students as their main source of income through-out their term time course of study. This will fund their higher education accommodation, living expenses and travel etc.

This amounts to a payment of approximately £4,500.00 per year – depending on location (rent) and type of course.



How the Vacation Maintenance Allowance, Accommodation Allowance and the H. E. Bursary are to be provided should be set out in the young person's pathway plan or learning agreement

## Higher Education Requirements and Expectations

Milton Keynes City Council, as corporate parents, want to ensure all care experienced young people have the best possible chance of success when undertaking a higher education and university course. The following guidance has been developed to provide clarity about the higher education payments process and the eligibility requirements that young people are expected to follow.

The frequency and amount of each payment as well as the method of paying the higher education bursary and allowance should be set out in the young person's Pathway Plan or learning agreement.

All payments are dependent on, and subject to, a young person agreeing to the following requirements:

- Maintaining regular and ongoing contact with their Personal Advisor (PA)
- Attending all pre-arranged meetings with their PA
- Completing all actions and agreed tasks within the education section of the pathway plan
- Identification of a suitable contact within the university staff/support service to take part in joint meetings in order to ensure educational goals and targets are met and appropriate practical, educational, pastoral and financial support is being provided
- To agree to regular liaison between the university and Personal Advisor, in order to monitor progress, attendance and attainment
- To inform their Personal Advisor and local authority of any change of circumstances (for example contact details, course details) as soon as possible
- Student Finance England have confirmed that they will fund the course and the young person is deemed a 'Home Student' for the Tuition Fee Loan
- Having an asylum status that enables them to receive Student Finance England loans and that they are deemed a 'Home Student'

All young people attending further, and higher education will be required to sign a consent to share/disclose information form and will need to agree to their leaving care Personal Advisor liaising with the educational establishment in order to support the program of study and monitor attendance and learning.

## Asylum Seeking Young People

Young people should only be supported to progress to university/higher education if they have a form of status that gives them access to 'Home Student Status and Fees' and Student England Finances and have a positive status that continues until the course is completed. All support from Milton Keynes City Council and any other source should be clearly set out in the Pathway Plan. Where young people do not have a status that gives them access to the above forms of financial support, Personal Advisors will support young people to apply for scholarships, grants and bursaries from voluntary organisations.

## Key Documents

Milton Keynes City Council will purchase a passport (including the check and send facility and passport photos) and one birth certificate for each young person. One passport, or passport renewal age 16 to 21, one birth certificate only if the young person does not have the original. Milton Keynes City Council will purchase a travel document for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children dependent on an assessment of need.

## Citizenship/Naturalisation applications

The Home Office have the discretion to not grant citizenship for certain young people who entered the UK illegally and have not resided here for at least 10 years. In these cases, once the application has been submitted and paid for, if unsuccessful there will not be a refund.

All requests for financial support need to be approved by the Team Manager and support of up to 50% of costs associated with gaining citizenship may be provided for young people up to age 25.

For those young people who have not been subject to immigration control but still wish to apply for citizenship/naturalisation (for example EU citizens), based on an assessment of need, Milton Keynes City Council may contribute towards the cost of the nationality and citizenship process. As these young people are not entitled to Legal Aid there may be additional legal costs. A decision to fund any of the above may be made by the head of service based on the principle of meeting 50% of costs associated with gaining citizenship for young people up to age 25.

To be granted citizenship or indefinite leave to remain some young people may have to prove their English language skills via IELTS. In addition to this young people will have to prove their knowledge of life in the UK by passing the Life in the UK test. In order to pass the Life in the UK test young people will have to undertake independent study supported by the Life in the UK book.

## Introduction to Driving

Depending on an assessment of need, Milton Keynes City Council will provide the funding for one provisional driving licence, one theory test, one practical test and the cost of 10 (1 hour) motor car driving lessons to introduce young people to driving.

The allowance is conditional on the young person having the funds for 10 lessons or having paid for 10 lessons themselves. Once the young person has evidenced this Milton Keynes City Council can fund a further 10 lessons up to £300.00. As an alternative, if the young person would like to do an intensive course and has evidenced that they have the funds to cover the remainder of the costs, Milton Keynes City Council can provide a lump sum amount of £300.00.

Where possible a VAT receipt should be obtained. The instructor should have an ADI (Approved Driving Instructor) number.

This is only available to young people who have been continuously engaged in education, training or employment for 3 months and do not have any driving convictions preventing them from successfully having a license. Depending on circumstances, lone parents and sick and disabled young people may be exempt from the 3 months in education, training or employment condition.

Additionally, Milton Keynes City Council will pay for one practical driving test. This is dependent on an approved driving school recommending that the young person is ready to take the test.

The Introduction to Driving Allowance will only be paid to young people who remain in contact with Milton Keynes City Council and are actively engaged in the pathway planning process.

## Health

Milton Keynes City Council will assist young people to access services to meet their health and developmental needs via the 'looked after' children health provision and via universal health services.

Social Workers/Personal Advisors should complete a HC1 (SC) form for all 16 and 17 year olds. The HC1 (SC) form enables young people to obtain an NHS low-income exemption certificate. This will provide free or reduced cost dental, optician and prescription services. In situations where young people require specific health items these will be considered following an assessment of need.

Milton Keynes City Council will assist young people to access counselling and/or therapeutic services via universal health services and the Child and Adolescent/Adult Mental Health Services. Depending on an assessment of need and where CAMHS/Adult Mental Health services and universal services are not available a request should be made for financial support through resources panel.

## Leisure Allowance

Should a young person wish to pursue a hobby / leisure activity of a higher expense then funding towards this will be considered for a time limited period by the Team Manager, providing that there is evidence of commitment from the young person and there is a clear plan of how they will take on this payment in the future. We are aware that hobbies and leisure activities can have a significantly positive impact on health and emotional wellbeing and therefore they are encouraged.

## Cultural, Religious and Special Needs

Where appropriate, and dependent on an assessment of need, Milton Keynes City Council will fund services in relation to a young person's cultural, religious and special needs.

## Maintaining Contact with Support Networks

Milton Keynes City Council recognise that young people may choose to live away from the city and can be at some distance from important sources of support, be that family, friends or religious

groups. When aged 16 and 17 a plan for funding the travel costs will be made by the Social Worker and documented in the pathway plan. This can include travel costs to national places of worship fortnightly, subject to assessment.

For those young people aged 18 – 20 inclusive, Milton Keynes will fund travel expenses to see positive support networks up to 4 times a year. This will be assessed and agreed within the pathway plan and will need authorisation from a Team Manager. For those young people regularly travelling nationally to spend time with support networks consideration for purchasing a discount rail card will be made, ensuring trips are more affordable.

## Childcare

Personal Advisors can support a young person to explore all options with regards to childcare and universal support

Childcare costs should be accessed through the Care to Learn Fund. [Gov UK Care to Learn..](#) The Care to Learn Fund provides financial support to assist young parents under the age of 20 to undertake education.

## Child Maternity/Paternity Grant

Based on an assessment of need Milton Keynes City Council may provide a one- off £200.00 maternity/paternity grant. This is available from 8 weeks before the baby is due. This is intended to assist young people with preparing for the birth of their first baby and should be used to purchase essential equipment. If a young person is expecting multiple babies, they can receive £200 for each child. The PA/Support Worker must accompany the young person to obtain the required items and obtain a receipt.

Once benefit entitlement has been established the young person may be able to claim the Sure Start Maternity Grant of £500.00 which is available from the DWP. This may be payable prior to the birth of the baby (please seek advice from a welfare rights worker). This is only available for the first child or if there is no other child living with them. Asylum seeking lone parents who are not eligible to claim the Sure Start Maternity Grant will be provided with the equivalent amount for their first child.

A voucher or gift to the value of £30.00 is available when a young person has a new baby. Subject to the above criteria, the grant and the voucher/gift are available for all new parents (whether male or female). This would be based on an assessment of need and if both parents were eligible, it would only be paid once.

## Personal Luggage

Luggage – all young people moving to independence or between placements must have appropriate personal luggage. At least two items of appropriate personal luggage to be purchased to the value of up to £80 in total. This is a one-off purchase.

## Emergency Payments for Those in Independent Accommodation and Under 21 Years Old

Principles:

- All avenues for DWP support should be explored and exhausted initially, for example hardship payments/short term benefit advance.
- Where a young person requests emergency payments their Pathway Plan will require immediate amendment to include an agreed piece of work to address budgeting. The initial stages of this work should be completed within the first two weeks of the request being made.
- Where a young person requests an emergency payment their PA/SW should explore education/training options.

When a young person presents for assistance with emergency payments the following steps should be followed:

- Discuss reason for emergency, budgeting difficulties, strategies already in place
- Explore if food bank or community larder / fridge is an option
- If electricity / gas is needed then a contribution of no more than £20 can be considered – the Social Worker/Personal Advisor must purchase the fuel and make plans to complete a piece of work which addresses ongoing budgeting.
- The emergency payment can be considered a maximum of three times in a six month period up to the age of 20.
- Any emergency payments and subsequent direct work completed must be recorded on the Pathway Plan.

## Consultation with Young People

Expenses and remuneration related to enabling young people to participate in consultation exercises will be provided following an assessment of need.

## Exceptional Needs Payments

Where appropriate, and dependent on an assessment of need, Milton Keynes City Council may provide funds for exceptional needs grants and one-off payments.

If a decision is required urgently a Team Manager will authorise up to £100.00; Examples of exceptional needs include costs associated with family bereavement.

## Setting Up Home Allowance (SUHA)

This allowance is paid to support a young person when moving to their own tenancy. For it to be utilised evidence of a tenancy agreement will be needed. There is also an expectation that the young person remains in contact with Milton Keynes City Council. The SUHA can be spent in stages and there is an acknowledgement that a small proportion of it will be utilised before a young person has their own independent accommodation. The SUHA is available to a young person until they are 25 years old.

Item	Amount	Paid by	Transferable Y/N	Comments
TV Licence	£159	1 <sup>st</sup> Year – MKCC Subsequent years – Care Leaver	N	
Equipping Accommodations – to include Fitting of a gas/electric cooker by an approved fitter	Up to £3000	MKCC	Y	To be spent on items for equipping accommodation. The allowance will always be spent collaboratively between the Personal Advisor and young person. Original receipts should be retained by Social Workers/Personal Advisor for audit purposes, reclaiming VAT and in case defective items need to be returned
Removal Costs	Up to £150	MKCC	N	Payable once
Health & safety pack and security	Up to £100	MKCC	N	Two smoke detectors, one carbon monoxide detector, door security chain, chub lock, fire blanket and first aid kit
Contents insurance	Up to £100	1 <sup>st</sup> Year – MKCC Subsequent years – Care Leaver	N	
Setting up home starter pack	Up to £40	MKCC	N	Coffee, tea, washing-up liquid, light bulbs, laundry and cleaning equipment utility key/card top-up, etc
<b>Total Amount</b>	<b>£3549</b>			

## Financial Support for Young People Aged 21-25

Young people are entitled to resume or continue a leaving care service from the age of 21 to 25 on request.

The primary purpose of the support from age 21 to 25 is to provide continuity and on-going practical support and guidance. Where young people require financial support, Personal Advisors will assist the young person to identify universal sources of financial support to enable young people to be self-sustaining.

Milton Keynes City Council are committed to assisting and supporting young people to maximise their potential through educational and training opportunities and financial support will only be considered for costs associated with education, training and employment other than for supporting direct work once 21-25 years old.

Any financial support will be based on an assessment of need and on the young person's motivation and commitment to complete the course. Short courses will only be considered as a one-off to support young people into a specific area of employment.

Where young people aged 21 to 25 wish to commence or resume education or training after their 21st birthday, they may be entitled to claim Universal Credit. If this is not the case funding will be considered following an assessment of need and of the motivation of the young person to undertake, sustain and complete the course.

As young people may be on a low income, Personal Advisors should support their students to apply for reduced rate fees. Personal Advisors should support young people with making timely applications for discretionary learner support funds- ensuring that the college are aware that the young person is a care leaver as this places them in a priority group  
<https://www.gov.uk/discretionary-learner-support/overview>

If young people aged 21-24 wish to undertake a course of education or training but are prevented from doing so due to a financial barrier such as travel costs then an initial weekly bus pass can be provided. This would be provided based on an assessment of need, once all alternative options had been exhausted and as part of the Pathway Planning process.

Those in higher education will continue to receive the financial support defined within the higher education section of this policy, until either the course ends or their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday – whichever occurs first

## Qualifying Care Leavers

Section 24 (advice and assistance) of the Children Act 1989 [as amended by the Planning Transitions to Adulthood for Care Leavers 2010 Guidance and the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010] covers 'Qualifying Young People'.

Depending on an assessment of need, Milton Keynes City Council has a responsibility to provide practical and financial support and assistance to Qualifying Children and Young People over 16.

Individual young people may be given practical support and financial assistance (Children Act 1989 (Section 24A (5)) and Section 24B) with priority being given to support relating to education, training and employment opportunities. Leaving care Social Workers/Personal Advisors should assist young people to maximise financial support available from employment, benefits and education allowances and opportunities.

Milton Keynes City Council has a duty to provide vacation accommodation, or the means to secure it, to any care leaver qualifying for advice and assistance, who is between the ages of 16 and 25, who is in higher education or in residential further education and who needs it.

Depending on an assessment of need Qualifying Children and Young People may require and should be provided with, the same level of service as Eligible, Relevant or Former Relevant young people. All financial decisions will have to be approved by the Team Manager / Head of Service.

## 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.

### <https://mycovenant.org.uk/>

The Care Leaver Covenant is a national inclusion programme that supports care leavers aged 16-25 to live independently.

### **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 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 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)

**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

**Reconstruct**

Independent visitors service and advocacy

E: [MKadvocacy@reconstruct.co.uk](mailto:MKadvocacy@reconstruct.co.uk)