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Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

**GUIDE TO FINANCIAL
SUPPORT FOR YOUNG
PEOPLE LEAVING CARE IN
ROTHERHAM**

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INFORMATION SHEET

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Date of DLT decision	

**Guide to Financial Support for Young People Leaving Care in
Rotherham**

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1. Introduction

- 1.1.** This guide describes how Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) will provide young people with financial support and help young people to gain confidence in handling their money.
- 1.2.** Whilst being looked after it is important that young people are assisted to start thinking about managing their money as early as possible. The experience of those that have already left care and are living independently informs us that difficulties in managing budgets effectively on a low income is one of the main areas that care leavers experience. Young people should be encouraged to use the assistance and support available to them whilst still in care, to gain experience with budgeting and avoid getting into difficulties at a later stage.
- 1.3.** All Care Leavers who are ready to move onto independence will receive an allowance to set up home, and financial help with education and training courses, including higher education or help to get and keep a job.
- 1.4.** In all our dealings with young people we will not take into account any money they may have in savings or trusts etc.
- 1.5.** All allowances should be based on an assessment of need and set out in the young person's Pathway Plan. The Plan must highlight any attached conditions, how payments will be made, the frequency of payments and when they will be reviewed and cease. If young people are not satisfied with the amount or way we are paying them, there should be a review of their Pathways Plan to reassess their needs.
- 1.6.** Where young people are in receipt of money from RMBC, the way in which they are paid and the amounts they will receive will be agreed in their Pathway Plan, which will be reviewed at a minimum of every six months. If young people do not comply with the agreements made within the Pathway Plan about getting money, then sanctions may be imposed in the manner in which they receive their allowance but not the amount they receive.
- 1.7.** The allowances set out in the following sections are subject to an assessment of young people's needs. Care Leavers who are also Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

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are entitled to the same allowances as any other Care Leaver. However, allowances to this group of young people may be affected and limited as a result of their immigration status.

- 1.8.** Certain groups of children who are Looked After and Care Leavers aged 16 & 17 are eligible to claim welfare benefits (lone parents and sick and disabled young people). Where young people are eligible to claim, support should be provided to enable them to maximise their income. Where young people aged 16 & 17 are in receipt of welfare benefits the leaving care allowances cease.
- 1.9.** Care Leavers will continue to receive a service from RMBC until they are at least 21 years old, unless they are in education or training or wish to have a continuing service with RMBC, in which case their support, subject to assessment, can continue until they reach the end of their agreed programme of education and training or their 25th birthday. Any financial support that is agreed upon and provided to the young person will be detailed within their Pathway Plan. Where young people stop receiving a leaving care service at 21 years old, but then wish to return or are returning to education or training at any time before their 25th birthday, they can return to the Leaving Care Team and will have a new assessment of their needs carried out. For those young people who are returning to education, an education and training focused Pathway Plan will be completed and this will include details of any agreed financial support to be provided to them.

2. Eligible Young People

- 2.1.** An Eligible young person is one who is aged 16/17, has been Looked After by the Local Authority for a period of 13 weeks which began after reaching the age of 14, and who remains Looked After. The period of 13 weeks need not have been continuous and may be made up of a series of shorter periods when the child was Looked After. Planned periods of respite care do not count towards eligibility. The period of Care must cross their 16th birthday.
- 2.2.** Eligible young people include young people remanded into the care of the Local Authority. Young people remanded into the care of the Local Authority are regarded as Eligible, even if they are not given a custodial sentence, providing that the period of remand is for 13 weeks or more, and crosses their 16th birthday.

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- 2.3.** Young people on a Care Order remain Eligible until such time as they reach their 18th birthday, or the Care Order is discharged, whatever their living arrangements.

3. Relevant Young People

- 3.1.** Under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, a Relevant child is one who was previously an Eligible child, but who is no longer Looked After and is under the age of 18.

4. Young People Detained or in Hospital

- 4.1.** Regulation 3 of the Care Leavers Regulations provides for an additional category of Relevant young people. These are young people who, on reaching their 16 birthday are detained in a remand centre, young offender's institution, or any other institution ordered by the Court and immediately prior, to being detained or in hospital had been looked after for 13 weeks after reaching the age of 14. This exemption applies even if the young person is detained overnight.

- 4.2.** Regulation 3 also provides that a child who has lived for a continuous period of six months or more with:

- a) his/her parent.
- b) someone who is not his/her parent, but who has parental responsibility for him.
- c) where he/she is in care and there was a Residence Order in force immediately before the care order was made, a person in whose favour the residence order was made then that child is not a Relevant child despite falling within section 23A(2). Where those living arrangements break down and the child ceases to live with the person concerned, the child is to be treated as a Relevant child.

5. Former Relevant Child

- 5.1.** Defined in section 23C(1) of the 1989 Act as a young person who is:

- a) aged 18 or above, and either.
- b) has been a relevant child and would be one if he/she were under 18.
- c) immediately before he/she ceased to be looked after at age 18, was an eligible child.

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6. Young Parents

Relevant young people who are lone parents can claim Income Support, but not Housing Benefit. For all other purposes of the Act they are considered Relevant.

6.1. Persons qualifying for advice and assistance are defined in Section 24 of the 1989 Act as a person who is:

- a) aged at least 16, but is under 21.
- b) with respect to whom a Special Guardianship Order is in force (or was in force when they reached 18) and was looked after immediately before the making of that Order.
- c) at any time after reaching the age of 16 but while he was still a child was, but is no longer, Looked After, accommodated or fostered.

6.2. A Qualifying child who is 16/17 years old and has previously been Looked After, but ceased to be Looked After before their 18th birthday, does not have the same restrictions to claiming welfare benefits as Eligible and Relevant young people do. Because of this the Leaving Care Team will not pay a personal allowance or pay for the accommodation costs for these young people. All Qualifying children aged 16+ who would like a service from Leaving Care Team will have their needs assessed. Where, following the Initial Assessment, it is concluded that support will be necessary over a period of time a plan will be drawn up with the young person. The plan will outline the support to be provided to the young person, including, if appropriate, any financial support. The plan will be drawn up by a social worker or suitably qualified person.

7. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

7.1 A child's immigration status has no bearing on a local authority's duties to provide leaving care support and the duties of the local authority to unaccompanied or trafficked children apply as equally to asylum seeking young people as they do to all children looked after children. UASCs usually have equal access to financial support from the Leaving Care Service, depending on their immigration status, they may have differing entitlements to public funds which could affect their entitlement. A child's immigration status has no bearing on a local authority's duties to provide care leaving support. Unaccompanied children must be provided with the same support as for any care leaver

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7.2 However, the planning for permanence for UASC who are looked after should consider the potential of re-unification with the child's birth family subject to child protection considerations being paramount. Those who return under Assisted Voluntary Returns Families and Children are eligible for up to £2,000 worth of reintegration assistance for each person, including a £500 relocation grant in cash on departure for immediate resettlement needs. Once home, a range of reintegration assistance options are available, tailored to the returnee's individual needs. This assistance is to help returnees make an income and become financially independent.

- 7.1.** Most children who arrive in the UK seeking asylum without a parent or guardian, make an application to the UK Border Agency (UKBA), and are granted Discretionary Leave for three years, or until they are 17 and a half years old, whichever comes first. They then have the opportunity to make an 'in-time application' for this leave to be extended, and as long as they do this before their original leave has expired, they will usually have access to public funds, which includes entitlement to welfare benefits, whilst they are awaiting a decision from the UKBA. Any UASC subject to immigration control may need and require access to specialised legal advice and support particularly in relation to immigration and asylum applications, decisions and court proceedings. If they have been trafficked legal advice may be needed in respect of criminal proceedings or compensation claims.
- 7.2.** If the decision on their asylum claim is negative, but they make an in time appeal, they still have access to public funds until all of their asylum appeal rights have been exhausted. For those young people who are refused asylum and have exhausted all of their appeal rights, their entitlement to public funds, including welfare benefits, would usually end. At this point, the Local Authority will work in partnership with the UK Border Agency and the National Asylum Support Service to provide financial support to these young people whilst they are waiting for instructions and assistance in leaving the country.
- 7.3.** The above is the most common route for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children entering the UK, but there are other possible outcomes of their asylum claim:

 - a) The young person could be granted Refugee Status (i.e. granted asylum), they would have leave to remain for five years, and access to public funds.
 - b) Or the young person could be refused asylum but granted Humanitarian Protection (HP) with leave to remain for five years, again usually with access to public funds. HP is most

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commonly granted when the young person is at some risk of 'ill-treatment' in the particular country they have left but does not meet the criteria of the Refugee Convention. This is a rare category for UASC.

c) There is also the possibility that the UK Border Agency could refuse asylum with no grant of leave. In this case the UASC would be returned to his/her country of origin.

7.4. From the age of eighteen former relevant children who have been granted leave to remain in the UK can generally claim means tested benefits and have rights to public housing. This includes cases where the person's leave to remain has expired but they have applied for an extension of leave to remain (provided the application was made before the previous period of leave expired) and that application is still under consideration, or an appeal against refusal of the extension has been made. It is especially important, therefore, that the person is advised that he/she has the opportunity to apply for an extension of leave before the earlier period of leave to remain that was granted expires.

7.5. For young people aged over 21 who are "unlawfully present in the UK" – which includes those who have been refused asylum and have either not applied for an extension of further Discretionary Leave to remain or have applied for an extension but that application and any appeal has been rejected, they can generally only be supported to the extent necessary to avoid a breach of their human rights (under the European Convention of Human Rights). Therefore a Human Rights Assessment should be arranged to ascertain if leaving care support should continue. As a general rule, the person will not usually be able to show that support should continue solely because they have no other means of assistance and be made destitute if it is stopped because they could avoid that by leaving the United Kingdom. Examples that could demonstrate that support should continue for human rights reasons might be:

- The person is taking all reasonable steps to leave the UK but is unable to do so immediately e.g. because they are waiting for the required travel documents from the national embassy.
- The person is temporarily unable to leave the UK because they are too sick to travel.
- The person is awaiting the outcome of judicial review proceedings in the higher courts in relation to his/her asylum claim.

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8. Identification Documents

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.

8.1. National Insurance Numbers do not get issued automatically. At the age of fifteen and nine months, the social worker for the young person should contact the New Registrations Section of the National Insurance Number Office – HMRC to instigate the process of obtaining the National Insurance Number. For detailed guidance, [click here](#).

8.2. When the letter confirming the National Insurance number is received the social worker should record it on Liquid Logic and place a copy of it on the young person's electronic record.

8.3. To ensure young people have other documentation to prove their identity Children's Social Care will pay for the following:

- Passport.
- Travel documents (subject to an assessment).
- Provisional Driving Licence.
- Copy of Birth Certificate.
- Deed Poll to change name legally, if required.

8.4. The initial purchase of an Item of Personal Luggage up to the value of £40 will also be provided to all young people who meet the criteria of this policy.

9. Financial Assistance and Support for Eligible and Relevant Young People

Foster carers and providers commissioned by the local authority have a responsibility to prepare young people to leave care. They will be expected to help young people to learn how to budget and manage their finances. Eligible and Relevant young people (subject to an assessment) will receive an allowance (see Allowances Table 1). This money is to cover items such as clothing, toiletries, personal telephone calls, entertainment, entrance fees, personal items young people intend to take with them when they move on and treats.

9.1. Young People Living with Parent(s)

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When an eligible young person returns to live with someone with parental responsibility, it is assumed that they will take financial responsibility for their child. RMBC will consider making a contribution towards the setting up costs of that return, provided that it does not exceed the value of the setting up home allowance. The parent should claim benefits appropriate to their circumstances. Any additional funding will be provided only in exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of a Service Manager.

- 9.2.** Young people will need to be assisted to open a Bank or Building Society (Savings) Account. This will be used to budget their personal expenses. Young people should be encouraged to save at least half of their personal allowances for more expensive clothing and personal items they may wish to buy.
- 9.3.** Young People will also need a Bank (Current) Account.
- If young people are working this will allow them to be paid directly into an account.
 - When young people leave care a bank account will enable the Council where necessary to also make payments to them.
 - Benefit agencies now prefer to pay benefits into bank accounts for those eligible for benefits post 18.
 - Social workers and personal advisors should look into what types of accounts are available to young people.
 - Foster carers, personal advisors and social workers should help young people make a decision about which one will suit them.
 - Young people who are still in foster care but work and earn money should be encouraged to save a proportion of the money they earn that they will not access until they are 18. This will assist them in preparing for the realities of leaving care and is a step towards taking full financial responsibility in the future.
 - All payments will be paid into young people's bank accounts and in exceptional circumstances in cash agreed as part of the Pathway Plan. This should be recorded, both in terms of the amount of payments and how they will be paid. Young people should also be

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advised about how they are able access discretionary payments. Young people must be provided with a copy as a record of this agreement.

- If a young person lives outside Rotherham and needs a cash payment, the social worker/PA will contact the leaving care service in the area where the young person lives or the service provider so that the young person can receive money locally for which that local authority will be reimbursed.

9.4. Accommodation:

The local authority will arrange and meet accommodation costs up to the age of 18. If the placement agreement states that the lodgings provided includes meals and/or utilities, the young person will be expected to pay towards this from their maintenance payment. The amount payable will be discussed and agreed within the placement agreement.

9.5. Subsistence and Other Payments:

A maintenance allowance in line with current DWP rates will be paid to young people including those who are studying, undertaking unpaid training, seeking employment, or undertaking voluntary work. If young people are undertaking training for which they are paid they will get the equivalent or a higher allowance from their training provider.

- 9.6.** Young people who are undertaking low paid employment and living independently or semi independently will continue to receive a maintenance allowance until they earn a given threshold up to the age of 18.

- 9.7.** Sick and disabled young people and lone parents (aged 16 & 17) are able to claim means tested benefits and therefore will not receive the majority of the 16 & 17 year old leaving care allowances as their welfare benefits are provided to cover these areas. The Maintenance Allowance and Clothing Allowance will cease for these groups.

- 9.8.** Where young people are living in semi-independent/supported placements adjustments will be made to the level of financial support/services provided as follows:

Table 1

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Placement Support to young person	Leaving Care Allowance	Deduction	Allowance
Full responsibility for all costs including utility and food	Full Maintenance Allowance	£0.00	£57.90
Accommodation and utilities only	Partial Maintenance Allowance	£10.00	£47.90
Accommodation, utilities and food provided	Partial Maintenance Allowance	£22.90	£35.00

Where money is deducted from the young people, the aim is to prepare young people for having to set money aside for when they are independent.

NB: Bed and Breakfast Accommodation is not to be used in any circumstances for 16 and 17 year olds.

10. Lone Parents:

10.1 Lone parents who are also eligible or relevant including those young people living in foster care and residential care or in education, are entitled to claim Income Support, Child Tax Credits, Child Benefit and Healthy Start Vouchers from the birth of their baby.

10.2 They are also entitled to apply for a Sure Start Maternity Grant from the day their baby is born (or up to 11 weeks earlier if in receipt of a qualifying benefit such as Employment & Support Allowance at that time).

10.3 The Sure Start Maternity Grant is only available for the eldest or first child. Lone parents should be supported and assisted to claim their full benefit entitlement. New claims for income support by lone parents can only be made if they have a child under the age of five. Lone parents will need to register for Jobseeker's Allowance and look for work unless they are sick or disabled or can claim income support as a carer when the youngest child reaches the age of 5.

11. Accessing Money - Rates for Eligible and Relevant Young People

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11.1. Young people who are not in education, employment or training will receive and living independently/semi independently:

Table 2

Living Allowance	£57.90 per week minus any deductions as identified in table 1
Housing/accommodation	Rent payments as required up until the age of 18
Travel seeking work/education	Funding for travel if the young person can evidence that they are actively seeking employment or training.

12. Eligible and Relevant Young People That Are Working

12.1. Eligible and Relevant young people who are working full time continue to receive a maintenance allowance that will guarantee they are in receipt of at least £100.00 per week in addition to their rent and travel costs. Once the total income from wages and subsistence exceeds £100.00, the amount of the maintenance allowance the local authority will pay will be reduced pound per pound after the first additional £20 per week. This is designed to give an incentive to young people to access employment opportunities.

12.2. For those working part time the same rules apply once the combination of wages and subsistence exceeds £80.00 per week.

12.3. Allowances to young people in full and part time employment will cease when the young person reaches the age of 18 and will be subject to young people providing proof of their earnings. If proof is not provided, the young person will not be eligible for additional allowances.

13. Apprenticeships

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13.1. The National Minimum Wage is the minimum pay per hour almost all workers are entitled to by law. It doesn't matter how small an employer is, they still have to pay the minimum wage. The [minimum wage rate](#) depends on a worker's age and if they are an apprentice. Use the [National Minimum Wage calculator](#) to check if the minimum wage has been paid.

13.2. The National Minimum Wage rate per hour depends on age and whether a young person is an apprentice – young people must be of at least [school leaving age](#) to receive it. This rate is reset in October of each year.

14. Young People in Further Education, Training and Employment

14.1. Eligible and Relevant young people (16 and 17 year olds) who are studying at sixth form college or further education colleges will be supported if living independently or semi-independently via their maintenance allowance.

14.2. For young people eligible for £1,200 16-19 bursary, this will be paid by the learning provider in cash/kind and be additional to the maintenance allowance

14.3. Further Education:

Young people who are undertaking full time further education courses may receive support up to £350.00 per year if the FE bursary is not available or insufficient. This is available for equipment, stationery, books and educational visits related to a course of further education. Young people will be required to submit a list of their needs regarding equipment; course books etc. and provide receipts to their leaving care social worker/personal adviser. In exceptional circumstances, and where courses require substantial amounts of equipment or materials additional funding will be considered following an assessment of need.

14.3. Computer Grant

Young people entering full time Further Education and Higher Education will be provided with a one off Computer Grant up to £250.00 (young people may wish to top-up this amount to purchase a higher specification machine). The course must be an academic course of at least GCSE level and require the use of a computer. This grant will be provided as a one off payment by the end of school year 11 (age 16) and ceasing to be a former relevant child at

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the age of 21 or beyond. The costs of the computer will be jointly met by the LAC Service and the Virtual School.

14.4. Young People Who Are Sick or Disabled:

14.5. Young people who are sick or disabled can apply for a Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) if they have a disability, including a:

- long-term health condition
- mental health condition
- specific learning difficulty, e.g. dyslexia

14.6. In order to qualify for this support young people will need to meet the [definition of disability](#) under the Equality Act 2010.

14.7. The [support available](#) depends on individual needs and not on income. Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) is paid on top of other student finance. This helps young people who are in education pay the extra costs they may have because of a disability. This allowance does not have to be repaid. How much young people will get depends on individual needs. For part-time students the '[course intensity](#)' can affect how much a young person can get.

14.8. Young people with a disability can also get help with the costs of:

- specialist equipment, e.g. a computer if needed because of a disability
- non-medical helpers
- extra travel because of a disability
- other disability-related costs of studying

14.10. Summary of payments for Eligible and Relevant Young People

Young people may receive these additional payments subject to assessment and need:

Table 3

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In education/training NB: this payment is term time only but does include half terms.	£10 per week bonus for full attendance and travel costs associated with the course.
Education expenses not covered by an FE bursary	Up to £350.00 per year for books, equipment, stationary, and educational visits related to a course of further education. Young people should submit a list of requirements regarding equipment, course books etc. and return receipts to their leaving care social worker/personal adviser. In exceptional circumstances, extra tuition, and where courses require substantial amounts of equipment or materials an additional grant will be considered following an assessment of need.
Clothing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £200 for young people who on entering care following their 16th birthday with inappropriate clothing for their needs. A list of the young person's needs and costing will need to be provided and approved by the Service Manager. • Additional £150.00 per year specifically for clothing for work/education/training subject to assessment.
Travel Costs	Travel costs may be met by the training or education provider. If travel costs are not available funding may be payable subject to an assessment of need.
Birthdays	<p>16th Birthday – Fostering rate for birthday allowance</p> <p>17th Birthday - Fostering rate for birthday allowance</p> <p>18th Birthday - £100 (currently £50)</p>
Health Needs	Complete HCI (SC) . The HCI (sc) form enables young people to obtain an NHS low income exemption certificate which provides free or reduced costs including dental, optician and prescriptive services. Where young people need glasses and are in receipt of an NHS voucher RMBC will match the value of the voucher.
Fares to attend place of worship	Upon request and subject to assessment.
Cultural and Individual Needs	Young people will be assisted in accessing services to meet their cultural needs. Subject to an assessment of need services will be funded or partially funded as appropriate to meet identified needs such as skin care, hair care or dietary needs.

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Holidays	<p>A 16 and 17 year old fostering holiday allowance rate will be provided to young people for a holiday with their former foster carer or residential home. Additionally the holiday allowance can be used by young people for holidays outside of this arrangement. A risk assessment and verification of the suitability of the holiday/destination and accommodation will need to be undertaken and the arrangements should be set out in the young person's Pathway Plan.</p>
Christmas / Festivals	<p>Young people who are non-Christian should be given the choice as to when they will receive their allowance which will be the equivalent to that provided for young people in foster care. They should also be offered the opportunity to split their allowance between Christmas/Festival.</p> <p>Following an assessment of need the Christmas/Festival allowance can be paid directly to the young person or given to the foster carer/key worker/PA or SW to purchase a gift or to contribute towards a celebration.</p> <p>This allowance will be subject to young people remaining in contact with social care and actively engaging in their pathway planning.</p>
Contact	<p>Where young people have family members who do not live locally to their placement (more than a short bus/train journey), travel costs may be provided following an assessment of need. Wherever possible travel arrangements should be booked in advance in order to reduce costs.</p>
Key Documents	<p>Funds will be provided for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passport 1 birth certificate Travel Document for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children – subject to an assessment of need and appropriateness of the request and destination. Driving Licence

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Childcare	<p>Lone parents, who wish to return to education, start a traineeship/apprenticeship or take up employment opportunities, will be assisted to identify funds from universal services to cover or contribute to child care costs. In the first instance, the Care to Learn Fund, individual colleges, Sure Start, HMRC (through working tax credits), the Job Centres Flexible Support Fund and other universal services must be approached as sources of potential child care funding. Where appropriate and dependent on an assessment of need, with all options having been explored without success, RMBC may contribute towards the costs of child care.</p> <p>The Care to Learn Fund Care to Learn provides financial support to assist young parents under the age of 20 to undertake education.</p> <p>Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children who have applied for asylum and have an initial decision such as Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary Leave can apply for a Care to Learn Fund grant</p>
Prom	<p>Young people can access up to £100 to assist with the costs of attending a Prom. This can be used towards any Prom related activity including Clothing, hair/ makeup, travel and photos.</p>

15. Financial Support to Care Leavers 18+ (Former Relevant Children)

At 18 as an adult living independently, young people are expected to be responsible for their own maintenance costs. If young people are not in employment they will be entitled to claim state benefits. Since this is an entitlement the Local Authority no longer has a duty to support young adults financially unless this is required to assist in the seeking and maintenance of education, training or employment.

16. Claiming Benefits

NB. At the time of forming this policy, Universal Credit (UC) is in the process of being implemented. This will require an addendum to the policy to be included once UC is implemented, together with proposed changes to Housing Benefit rules.

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- 16.1.** Benefits can be claimed when a young person reaches the age of 18 years. Personal Advisers should assist the young person to prepare to make the application one month before their 18th birthday. The pathway plan should determine who is responsible for completing this task.
- 16.2.** The PA should assist young people to make an appointment to commence their claim on the 18th birthday. Care Leavers will be expected to attend an appointment at the Job Centre Plus the DWP named single point of contact, complete an application form and submit any evidence that is required. SWs or PAs will need to check that Care Leavers have the necessary ID. For all benefit applications and renewals, proof of address, bank details and ID will be required (e.g. birth certificate, passport, driving licence).
- 16.3.** The process following the application can take a few weeks and providing that the young person has kept all appointments, submitted an application and any paper work requested, they will continue to be supported financially by the Leaving Care Team for up to four weeks. Failure to make an application at the appropriate time, missed appointments or failure to submit paperwork is the responsibility of the young person. RMBC is under no obligation to compensate for a young person's failure to comply with the benefits application process.
- 16.4.** Care Leavers will be expected to utilise all avenues available to them prior to financial support being provided by RMBC where they have not kept appointments or submitted an application despite support to do this. In these circumstances, the local authority will provide minimal assistance which may include food parcels, and vouchers. Cash payments will only be made in exceptional circumstances.
- 16.5.** If benefit payments are disrupted through no fault of the young person they will receive the full Young Persons Allowance minus any deductions identified in Table 1. In these circumstances, young people will be required to sign an agreement that once their payments have been received and if they receive backdated payments that any money that we have paid will be repaid.
- 17. Job Seeker's Allowance**
- 17.1.** This benefit is set up to provide temporary assistance whilst seeking work. Young people aged 18 and above who are not in Education, Training or Employment (NEET), will make an application for Job Seeker's allowance.

17.2. Application Process:

The Personal Adviser will:-

- Assist the young person to make the claim on line or by telephone.
- Arrange and attend appointment at the Job Centre with the young person..
- Support the young person to maintain the ongoing signing appointments and requirements to search for agreed jobs.

17.3. Once young people are receiving payments they will still be expected to attend an appointment every week or fortnight to check that they are still NEET and to be offered support to access employment. Young people will also be asked to evidence that they have applied for jobs weekly and that they have applied for any that they have suggested to them. If this is not adhered to their benefits may be stopped for a few weeks. In these circumstances the Leaving Care Team is not responsible and has no duty to pay any money and will provide minimal assistance as identified earlier in this policy.

18. Income Support

18.1. Eligibility

This is an allowance that young people may be entitled to if they are in further education. In order to be eligible young people will have to be undertaking a course that is more than 16 hours per week. If eligible it will remain payable whilst the young person is still in further education up until 20 Years old. Young people will also be entitled to Income Support if pregnant or a lone parent. For young people who are pregnant an application should be made once they are 29 weeks pregnant even if they are still looked after.

18.2. Application Process

- a) Apply by phone or download the application form, print, complete and send to Job Centre.
- b) Application is from the date of phone call or receipt of application form.

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- c) Interview arranged to confirm application details.
- d) If applying because of being in education, a copy of the Learning Agreement, showing the hours of study, is required.

19. Employment Support Allowance

19.1. Eligibility:

This is the allowance that young people should be applying for if they are unable to work due to your physical, emotional or mental health needs.

19.2. A medical certificate will be required to confirm the identified need.

N.B. The DWP will be assessing the young person's capability of working and may find a job that takes their medical needs into consideration.

19.3. Application Process:

- a) Applications made by telephone.
- b) An application form will be sent to the young person which they may need assistance to complete and must be returned immediately.
- c) Forward medical certificate to the DWP- preferably by hand and receipt needs to be obtained.
- d) The young person's Medical Certificates MUST cover the whole period claiming for and be continuous.

20. Housing Benefit

20.1. Housing Benefit requires proof of income before any payment is assessed. It is important to ensure that the Housing Benefit department is advised of all change of circumstances, including any change in benefits, even if the Leaving Care Team is supporting young people financially.

20.2. If young people have a tenancy, Housing Benefit must be claimed or rent and council tax will not be paid. Current rates for different areas can be checked via the Rent Service website, or

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via <http://www.direct.gov.uk> following the links to Local Housing Allowance and individual council areas.

21. Accommodation

Where there are plans for young people to rent private sector accommodation, the amount of rent must be within the Local Housing Allowance for the area they plan to live in. Provision of a deposit or rent in advance must be clarified before the tenancy agreement is authorised.

21.1. Housing Benefit for tenants renting in the private sector is calculated using the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates. The Rent Officer sets the level of the LHA for the different types of property in each LHA designated area. Payments will generally be made directly to the tenant unless they are particularly 'vulnerable'. Care leaver status could, in principle, qualify a young person to have his or her LHA paid directly to the landlord. The intention of paying LHA directly to tenants is to encourage responsibility for paying the rent themselves. LHA rates are set annually.

21.2. In circumstances where the young person is not able to access social housing or would be at risk in such accommodation a deposit and rent in advance will be considered. This would be subject to assessment. Where young people are moving into private accommodation a deposit and rent in advance will not be approved in the following circumstances:

- The rent charged by a landlord is higher than the Local Housing Allowance for the area.
- Where a young person has appropriate access to social housing.

21.3. Young people leaving care are exempt from the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) up to the age of 22; therefore they are eligible to rent accommodation up to the 1 bedroom Local Housing Allowance rate. In exceptional circumstances RMBC will consider acting as a guarantor for young people aged 16 and 17 following an assessment of need and all other possible guarantors being explored and ruled out. Where RMBC has acted as a guarantor for 16 and 17 year olds, a new tenancy agreement will need to be completed when the young person reaches their 18th birthday in all circumstances and this should be agreed at the time of the original tenancy agreement.

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21.4. When young people move into private rented accommodation their Personal Adviser should take digital pictures that show the condition of the property and any items that are included in the rent/inventory. Copies of the pictures should be provided to the landlord, young person and a copy uploaded onto the young person's personal file. This will assist if there is any dispute about the condition of the property and the return of the deposit when the young person's tenancy ends.

21.5. Young people who remain in their previous foster care placement under a Staying Put Arrangement are eligible to claim Housing Benefit (See Staying Put Policy).

22. Cold Weather Payments:

In cold weather, help towards the cost of heating for each qualifying week is available from the Benefits Agency for parents of children under 5 years who are in receipt of:

- Income Support
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance

The parent needs to notify the Benefits Agency if they have a baby or have a child start to live with them. Thereafter the payments are made automatically.

23. Further Education

From the age of 18 to the end of the academic year following their 21st birthday, care leavers who are 'estranged from their families' and who are studying full time (12 hours or more of 'guided learning') can claim Income Support and Housing Benefit on the grounds of being in 'Relevant Education'. Young people can start or change courses at any point up until their 21st birthday.

23.1. Where young people aged 21 to 25 wish to commence or resume education or training after their 21st birthday, financial assistance and funding will be considered following an assessment of need and of the motivation of the young person to undertake, sustain and complete the course.

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24. Additional Funding Support for Former Relevant Young People

Former Relevant young people can obtain additional incentives from the RMBC depending on whether they are NEET or EET as follows:-

Table 4

	In Education, Training or work	Not in Education or Training
Receiving State Benefits	£10.00 pw for full attendance. This payment is during term times only but does include half terms and will be paid each half term in arrears subject to confirmation of attendance.	Fares to interviews and to attend education or training if this is not provided by the training or education provider.
No Benefits	See Financial Assistance for Care Leavers in Education.	Fares to interviews
Apprentices	£10.00 pw incentive for full attendance.	
Employed on Low Wage	If income is less than the JSA rate following outgoings for rent, water rates and fares subsistence payments will make up to the JSA rate + £10.00 pw incentive.	
Housing Costs		
Receiving Benefits	None	None
No Benefits	Education package See Financial Assistance for Care Leavers in Education.	None
Travel		
Receiving Benefits	Costs to get to course if not covered by FE grant or student finance. RMBC will pay for first 4 weeks travel to a new job.	Fares to interviews and to attend education or training if this is not provided by the training or education provider subject to an assessment. RMBC will pay for first 4 weeks travel to a new job.

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No Benefits	See Financial Assistance for Care Leavers in Education.	Fares to interviews and to attend education or training if this is not provided by the training or education provider subject to an assessment. RMBC will pay for first 4 weeks travel to a new job .
Contact with family	Fares for up to max of 4 visits per year	Fares for up to max of 4 visits per year
Childcare	<p>Lone parents, who wish to return to education, start a traineeship, apprenticeship or take up employment opportunities, will be assisted to identify funds from universal services to cover or contribute to child care costs. In the first instance, the Care to Learn Fund, individual colleges, Sure Start, HMRC (through working tax credits), the Job Centres Flexible Support Fund and other universal services must be approached as sources of potential child care funding. Where appropriate and dependent on an assessment of need, with all options having been explored without success, RMBC may contribute towards the costs of child care.</p> <p>The Care to Learn Fund Care to Learn provides financial support to assist young parents who are under the age of 20 at the start of their course to undertake education.</p> <p>Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children who have applied for asylum and have an initial decision such as Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary Leave can apply for a Care to Learn Fund grant.</p>	Assistance may be provided subject to an assessment of need to allow young people to seek employment or training.

Table 5 – Funding Available To All Care Leavers Up To 21:

Further/Higher Education/Work	See Financial Assistance Form for Care Leavers in Education. For agreed accredited courses up to the age of 24.
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Special Needs	Resources may be provided in individual cases following an assessment of need and young people being assisted to access services to meet their specific needs.
Cultural/Religious needs	Individual cases to be considered following an assessment of need.
Clothing (excluding foster care)	Up to £150 towards special items associated with work/education. £100 Summer + £100 winter (Currently £100 for any purpose)
Other (Care Leavers Only)	
Birthdays (19th/20th)	£50.00 subject to remaining “in touch” and engaging in their pathway plan. (Currently £20)
18th Birthday	£100.00 (Currently £50 if not in foster care)
21st Birthday	£100.00 (Currently £20) subject to being “in touch”.
Christmas/Festivals	£50.00 (Currently £20)
Setting up home allowance	Up to £2000.00 to spend on essential items plus cost of 1 st year insurance.
Security	Up to £100 for locks/bolts etc. subject to assessment.
Initial Food stock	£40.00 – One off payment.
Smoke alarm, fire blanket and carbon monoxide alarms	Subject to assessment and consultation with Landlord.
First Aid box	£10.00
TV License	Full cost – One off payment for first license.
Payments for Consultation/Participation Work	£30 per day pro rata + travel expenses.
Maternity	£200 payable in 3 rd trimester in addition to state benefit entitlement
Driving lessons	£100 contribution towards license and test fee + cost of 10 driving lessons. Subject to assessment of current circumstances and young person’s contribution.

25. Education and Training for Former Relevant Care Leavers

25.1. Further and Higher Education:

The Leaving Care Service will offer financial support for care leavers through at least one course of further or higher education of their choice starting before their 21st birthday as agreed and detailed in the Pathway Plan. If not met by a bursary or charitable funding, costs may be met, subject to assessment, for:

- Registration and Examination fees.
- Accommodation.
- Textbooks and equipment specified as essential.
- Activities essential to meet course requirements.
- Public transport between accommodation and course centre if over 3 miles, if they have attended the closest available course to their home.
- Transport costs to open days & college interviews.
- Specific clothing, including clothes for interview and essential equipment related to the course.

25.2. The Leaving Care Service will assist young people to apply for college/university support funds to help with costs associated with courses. For young people who cannot access benefits, either because they are over 21 years, or for some other reason, an assessment will be carried out and, subject to the outcome of that assessment financial support provided.

25.3. Accommodation may also be provided, or the means to secure it, to a maximum of the relevant Local Housing Allowance rates.

25.4. Relevant or Former Relevant Care Leavers entering a higher education or university degree course will be provided with financial support subject to an assessment of need. Income and outgoings should be calculated and young people in education should after their outgoings have been calculated, be left with a minimum weekly living allowance in line with DWP benefit rates after rent and utilities have been paid. If there is a shortfall this will be made up by RMBC if there is good reason why the young person is not able to work during their course.

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- 25.5.** Loans are available to all students in Higher Education. Tuition Fee Loans pay for the course. Maintenance Loans and Grants help with living costs (e.g. accommodation, books, bills etc.). Full information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/student-finance/overview>.
- 25.6.** It is expected that young people will access all funds available to them prior to an assessment and decision being made about the level of financial assistance that the local authority will provide. A written assessment will need to be completed by the social worker /PA and the proposed financial package presented to the Service Manager for authorisation.
- 25.7.** All student related finance may be applied for at the same time and advice obtained through the Student Loans Company.
- 25.8.** In addition RMBC will pay a bursary of £2,000 to young people in Higher Education. The Personal Advisor must arrange for this to be paid in instalments over the length of the course subject to attendance. This will not be included in any calculations for further support.
- 25.9.** Some Universities and Colleges also pay Institutional Bursaries and extra bursaries for students who have been in care. The PA must assist in applying for all these and also to charitable organisations for any additional funding. RMBC will provide travel costs for transporting a care leaver and their belongings to and from university at the beginning and end of terms, if required.
- 25.10.** Accommodation (or the money to secure it to a maximum of the relevant Local Housing Allowance rates) will be provided for holidays during the course, except for the time leading up to the first term, or after the last term. During the holidays, if a return to an ex-foster carer is planned this must be agreed in accordance with arrangements in line with the Staying Put Policy.
- 26. Post Graduate Courses and Requests for Support with Education or Training after age 21**
- 25.1** Young people will be assisted to identify financial support and resources to undertake post graduate courses and will not be financed via RMBC.
- 25.2** Young people previously eligible for leaving care services, who wish to or are resuming programmes of education or training after the age of 21, are entitled to an assessment to

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determine eligibility for financial support. They must be informed of this and provided in writing, information advising of their rights and entitlements. Support can be available for as long as the young person continues on the agreed education even if this ends beyond their 25th birthday.

26.4. Programmes are not limited to university study and might include:

- completion of a basic skills course, so that the young person has the numeracy and literacy skills needed to compete in the jobs market;
- take up of a course of further education;
- take up of a university place;
- participation in vocational training and apprenticeships.

25.5 Where a Care Leaver requests support through an educational programme, an assessment will be carried out by the Leaving Care team. The assessment will focus on the appropriateness of the education or training course for the young person given their level of ability, the purpose of undertaking the course and how it will help them to find employment in the future and financial assistance available to them from other means. It will draw on information about the young person's skills and capabilities, previous support given and the extent to which the young person made use of that. This information should have been set out in the Pathway Plan.

25.6 The extent of practical and financial assistance provided will depend on the young person's needs and will reflect the type of course, whether it is full or part time and an assessment of the young person's existing income will also be carried out. Advice will be given on sources of funding available from bursaries, grants and charitable organisations and young people will be expected to avail themselves of all sources of funding. The maximum payable will be maintenance at the equivalent of the personal allowance £57.90 per week, accommodation costs at the relevant Housing Allowance rate and essential course costs.

Incentives, festival and birthday allowances will not apply for young people over 21. If financial support is given, it will be dependent on attendance and the leaving care worker will need to check on this with a contact at the university or college.

27. Care Leavers in Custody

Young people on remand in custodial settings will not receive full personal allowances but will be paid £20 per month (currently £10). If sentenced to a term in custody, the prison will pay an allowance of £10 per week. Festival allowance will continue to be paid. Transport from custody will be arranged or paid for and any immediate needs on release considered and should be assessed in advance.

28. Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA) payment

Young people should be assisted to seek independent financial advice regarding the use of their award and how, for example, by establishing a Discretionary Trust Fund, they may retain entitlement to means tested benefits. A Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority payment is disregarded in calculating means tested benefit entitlement for the first 52 weeks after receipt of the award.

30. Young People With Other Income:

If a young person is in regular receipt of an income (for example, from parents or relatives, interest on an inheritance), the first £15 per week of this will not be taken into account for the purposes of payments.

31. Qualifying Care Leavers:

31.1. Local authorities must give advice, guidance on request have a discretionary power to give assistance, sometimes financial, to young people who do not meet the criteria for full leaving care support on account of their particular needs until they reach the age of 21. This needs to be assessed on a case by case basis. Young people qualifying for this will be:

- Under the age of 21 who were in the care of RMBC between the ages of 16 and 18 for any period of less than 13 weeks
- Relevant young people who have successfully returned home for 6 months by the time they reach age 18
- Those aged 16 to 21 who are or were subject to a Special Guardianship Order and were looked after by RMBC immediately before the making of the order.

- Young people accommodated by a health or education authority or by or on behalf of a voluntary organisation.

32. Emergency Payments

Young people will be supported to manage their finances effectively to meet their day-to-day needs. Where relevant and former relevant care leavers request additional support, they should be advised to access budgeting or crisis loans if they are able to. (See www.direct.gov.uk for more information).

The Leaving Care Service may, subject to an assessment of need, provide some time limited practical assistance in the form of emergency payments for food and clothing, etc. Should it appear that there are patterns to the request or, the young person consistently appears to be unable to manage their budget, action including formal budget advice and training will be required before any further payments are made.

In general, young people should always be encouraged to save part of their weekly maintenance to ensure that they can meet the cost of bigger items or, have money available in the event of an emergency. Any additional support received, should be recorded in the Pathway Plan alongside arrangements to ensure improved money management.

Where an emergency payment is being considered the following conditions will apply:

- The reason for making a payment and the young person's circumstances must be fully assessed together with the young person's other available means.
- Making a payment should be part of an overall support plan and contract to ensure the young person manages within the agreed levels of maintenance provided for all care leavers.
- The amount paid out should be recorded on the electronic record immediately so that if further requests are made this information is available.
- Where young people have lost/had money stolen they must obtain a crime reference number before an assessment of need is undertaken and hardship support provided.
- A supervised food shop may be provided to the maximum value of £10 and consideration may be given to support with gas (£5) and electricity (£5).

32. Complaints, Comments and Compliments:

All care leavers with whom staff are working should be made aware of the processes for giving feedback which might include comments, compliment or complaints. Young people may request/need help in completing feedback. Care leavers should routinely be encouraged to make suggestions and comments about, the services they are receiving, and agreement should always be sought about any issues or differences of opinion that may arise. However, where this cannot be done and the young person wants to make a complaint about the finances they have or are receiving, in the first instance local resolution should be attempted. The person receiving the complaint must acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 3 working days saying who will deal with it and when a response will be received and a substantive response must be given within 10 working days.