



# Route 21

## LEAVING CARE GUIDE TO MONEY MATTERS

Date of issue :



## Route 21 Leaving Care Finance Policy:

### Contents

1. Introduction
2. Living Allowances
  - 2.1 16/17 year olds living in residential or foster placements
  - 2.2 16 and 17 year old care leavers living in supported or semi/independent settings
  - 2.3 Top up payments
  - 2.4 Deductions
  - 2.5 Care leavers 18 years and over
3. Additional Allowances
  - 3.1 Birthday and Christmas/Festival allowances
  - 3.2 Setting up home allowance
  - 3.3 Contact with family
  - 3.4 Driving Lessons
  - 3.5 Clothing
  - 3.6 Identification Documents
  - 3.7 Transition to employment, training, education and benefits income
  - 3.8 Emergency Financial Assistance
4. Accommodation
  - 4.1 For 16 and 17 year old care leavers
  - 4.2 Care leavers over 18
5. Education, Training and Employment
  - 5.1 Further and Higher Education
  - 5.2 Further Education
  - 5.3 Higher education
  - 5.4 Training
  - 5.5 Care leavers returning over the age of 21
  - 5.6 Employment

- 5.7 Unpaid work experience, voluntary work and positive employability related activities
- 6. Health & Wellbeing
  - 6.1 Health costs
  - 6.2 Counselling or therapeutic needs
- 7. Specific groups of care leavers and those with additional or specific needs
  - 7.1 Care leavers who are parents
    - 7.1.1 Living Costs
    - 7.1.2 Maternity Grant
    - 7.1.3 Childcare Costs
    - 7.1.4 Cold weather payments
  - 7.2 Care leavers who are disabled
  - 7.3 Care leavers in custody
  - 7.4 Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people
  - 7.5 Young People who return home and young people living at home
  - 7.6 Young people in receipt of Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA) payment
  - 7.7 Young people with other income
  - 7.8 Qualifying young person
  - 7.9 Young people subject of SGO
  - 7.10 Young People in staying put arrangements
- 8. Requests for support over and above the entitlements
- 9. Information about entitlements

## 1. Introduction

Coventry City Council has statutory responsibilities to care leavers which include the provision of maintenance and accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds and financial support for a variety of other things depending on age and circumstances. Also there is a requirement to support young people to manage their financial resources and money, gradually helping them to take responsibility for themselves.

This policy outlines the arrangements that Coventry City Council has in place to meet their duties and responsibilities for young people from the age of 16 preparing to leave and once they have left care and it is intended for young people, staff, carers and parents.

All financial support is based on an assessment of need and will be set out in the young person's pathway plan which is regularly reviewed.

The policy should be read alongside the money matters guide for young people and the transitions policy.

## 2. Living Allowances

All allowances should be based on an assessment of need including maintenance payments and be detailed in the Pathway Plan. It must set out any conditions attached such as incentives and sanctions, how payments will be made, the frequency of payments and when they will be reviewed.

### **2.1 16/17 year olds living in residential or foster placements**

For children and young people in care, there needs to be an early emphasis on financial literacy and financial capability skills. Pocket money and identified allowances for e.g. leisure and clothing can be used whilst the young person is in foster or residential care to help develop these skills. This should be considered for all young people as early as possible and at the latest from the age of 15 onwards.

During the 6 months before leaving a care setting to move to semi/independence, use of further allowances for food, mobile phones, toiletries etc. should also be encouraged. Young people, foster carers, residential workers and, where appropriate, family members should be encouraged to think ahead and collect items that can be saved and used when the young person sets up their home.

A list of the essential items that a young person should have when they leave a care setting is available from Route 21. If for any reason they do not have these items the Social Worker will arrange for them to be obtained from Children Looked After budgets, unless the casework manager decides that they should not be provided with certain items. In that case a record should be made about that decision on the young person's record.

Saving should be encouraged and where young people have collected items for independent living they will not be penalised, and will remain entitled to their full allowances. Monies accrued through central government allowances such as the share foundation will also be disregarded when assessing entitlement.

Foster carers, residential staff, and independent reviewing officers will be required to support the social worker in ensuring that the information is received by the young person in a meaningful way and that the milestones set out above are being worked to in line with the needs of the child / young person.

## **2.2 16 and 17 year old care leavers living in supported or semi/independent settings**

A personal allowance will be paid which is equivalent to the benefits rates for young people - The up to date benefit rates can be found on the DWP website. (note: this is a departure from current practice of paying extra £10 per week to 16/17 year olds to help with budgeting which care leavers at 18 say is not helpful preparation for reality)

For young people up to the age of 17 and a half it will be paid at a frequency that is agreed by the TM at Route 21 either at the Route 21 office or via their bank account. The standard would be for fortnightly payments into a bank account. It cannot be accrued and paid as a lump sum at a later date, unless discussed in advance and agreed by the Route 21 Team Manager. The reason for such an agreement will be recorded on the young person's record.

Where possible, allowances will be paid into the young person's bank account. In some circumstances, particularly for those not engaged in education, training or employment, an arrangement may be made to collect their allowances at the same time as attending for a Leaving Care Finance Policy

meeting with Route 21 staff. In some circumstances young people may need assistance with managing their money and allowances may be split to require more frequent collection. In extreme circumstances the Route 21 Worker will arrange for provisions to be purchased with the young person or provide allowances 'in kind' instead of providing cash.

In the 6 months preceding a young person's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, an assessment should be made of whether allowances will be paid fortnightly into the young person's bank account to prepare them for transferring to the benefits system at 18. This will be agreed between the Route 21 Allocated Case Worker and Route 21 Team Manager.

### **2.3 Top up payments**

While in full time employment or on an employed apprenticeship or trainee scheme, top up payments should be considered based on assessment and to provide an incentive. Those incentives should be built into the Pathway Plan in the same way they are regards further education, see 5.2 below. If the young person's income falls below benefit rates the Route 21 Service will top it up to that figure.

If in part-time (under 16 hours) employment or on an employed apprenticeship or trainee scheme, any income will be disregarded and full personal allowance will be paid.

Proof of earnings will be needed in these situations.

### **2.4 Deductions**

If a young person is living in supported accommodation paid for by the LA, where their utilities and some food are provided, they will be expected to pay towards these costs or deductions from personal allowance will be made at the fixed rate. The amount will depend on the type of accommodation. (At end March 2014 the figure was set at £10 per week).

In order to prepare care leavers for managing their finances when they are over the age of 18 and financially independent, providers of regulated placements are expected to make deductions from personal allowances. This will be held as savings for them, to be used for irregular and unforeseen expenses, costs likely to be incurred in transition (see section 3.7) and/or any damage that may be caused to their accommodation. When the young person is 18, any funds remaining will be returned to them. In exceptional circumstances, Leaving Care Finance Policy

where this arrangement would not be beneficial for the young person, a decision about either reducing, or not making the deduction, will be made on a case by case basis by the Route 21 Team Manager.

## **2.5 Care leavers 18 years and over**

The primary financial responsibility for care leavers not in employment transfers at age 18 to the Department for Work and Pensions. Care leavers are eligible for a number of means tested and welfare benefits via Job Centre Plus. This would normally apply whether the young person has remained in foster or residential care or is living in supported or independent accommodation.

Care Leavers can claim Income Support and Housing Benefit whilst in further education from their 18th birthday until the end of the academic year in which they are 21. If not in further education, Jobseeker's Allowance will apply.

The Route 21 Service will help the young person to make their claims in a timely manner and to maximise their income from these sources. For further information, see the leaflet Know your rights, know your benefits.

## **3. Additional Allowances**

### **3.1 Birthday and Christmas/Festival allowances**

The following allowance will usually be paid:

<input type="checkbox"/> Birthday allowance age 16to 21	per annum	£50.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Christmas or other festival allowance		£50.00

The payments are dependent upon the young person maintaining a constructive relationship with the Route 21 service.

### **3.2 Setting up home allowance**

An allowance of up to £2,000 is available to pay towards the cost of setting up home and includes the cost of providing the first year's television licence and contents insurance if that can be arranged. Within Coventry support from the local community support grant is available. For accommodation of all young people outside the City and within it all funding opportunities will be pursued.

It may be spent in stages and will be spent for setting up the young person's own independent accommodation. In addition it needs to be spent with the young person's Route 21 worker. The Route 21 worker will discuss with the young person the sort of things they can spend the money on, e.g. furniture and household items including cleaning materials and other start up items, assist the young person in balancing cost, value for money and choice, and will make these purchases with the young person. A detailed list is available of standard items considered appropriate and approximate anticipated cost. If it is proposed that anything other than items on the list are purchased, agreement is required from the Route 21 Team Manager.

If this allowance has not been accessed by the time the young person is 21, a note will be made on the case file of the amount remaining. The allowance may be accessed only in exceptional circumstances where the Pathway Plan has made provision for that.

### **3.3 Contact with family**

The Route 21 Service will provide 16 and 17 year old young people with funding for transport to visit their family if they live in or close to Coventry, up to twice a month (if applicable). If the young person has a need to visit their family more often, or if they live further away, this will need to be discussed on a case by case basis and a decision made by the Route 21 Team Leader, based on a needs assessment, which will be recorded in the Pathway Plan.

As agreed in the Pathway Plans a young person over the age of 18 may be given such assistance as agreed with the Route 21 Team Manager. Assistance would normally be phased out as young people approach the age of 21 when financial assistance ceases.

### **3.4 Driving Lessons**

6 week tasters of driving lessons are offered to all young people. For young people who are or who have the prospect of working, need to drive for that purpose, and have the means to obtain and maintain a vehicle, support will be given via matched funding shared between the young person and the LA and this will be offered for driving lessons and the funding for the theory test will be provided. In exceptional circumstances the need to match funding could be waived. Also see 3.6 below regarding support to obtain provisional driving licence.

### **3.5 Clothing**

It is expected that young people leave care with adequate clothing and footwear etc. as outlined in 2.1. Similarly for a young person starting to be looked after over the age of 16 and placed in supported accommodation, it is expected that they bring from home the same sort of basic possessions. If for any reason that is not possible, the social worker will arrange for what is necessary to be purchased from Children Looked After budgets.

Thereafter the young person will be expected to budget for replacement clothing from their allowances, benefits or earnings and only in exceptional circumstances, as agreed by the Route 21 Team Manager, will clothes/shoes be bought for a young person.

### **3.6 Identification Documents**

All young people should have a National Insurance Number from the age of 16 but they 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\*\*](#).

When the letter confirming the National Insurance number is received the Social Worker should record it on Protocol and place it on the young person's paper file. The letter should be transferred at the time of hand over to the Route 21 team.

To ensure young people have other documentation to prove their identity the Route 21 Service will pay for the initial purchase of a copy of their birth certificate and at least One of the following:

- Passport
- Provisional driving licence

### **3.7 Transition to employment, training, education and benefits income**

There may be a need to bridge a financial gap for young people when their primary source of funding changes e.g. when starting work up until receipt of their First wage, transferring to benefits for up to 2 weeks or waiting for a student loan. All steps to avoid such gaps will be taken. Transitional payments will usually be made to ensure that a young person is not without income.

### **3.8 Emergency Financial Assistance**

Arrangements may be made to assist in an emergency if required by the Route 21 team or Emergency Duty Team out of office hours. This could involve a small cash payment or payment in kind. If authorised, the cause of the crisis and the details of help provided should be documented on the young person's case file. Crisis loans or support from DWP would have to have been explored prior to such payments being made and consideration will be given as to whether the amount given should be in the form of a repayable short term loan.

## 4. Accommodation

### **4.1 For 16 and 17 year old care leavers**

The Route 21 Service is responsible for providing accommodation until a young person is 18 years of age. A contribution from the weekly Personal Allowance is payable for food and utilities where applicable. The amount will vary depending on the type of Accommodation.

### **4.2 Care leavers over 18**

Responsibility for the provision or maintenance in, accommodation for care leavers ends when young people are 18. Young people become eligible for a number of means tested benefits including Housing Benefit. The Route 21 Service will help the young person to access those benefits if necessary.

In certain rare circumstances Route 21 would consider paying a bond and the First month's rent for young people over 18 to secure accommodation in the private sector and care leavers may be eligible for this. Such payments would be made only in circumstances whereby social housing cannot be accessed.

If there is a plan for a young person to remain in their foster home post 18 authorisation must be sought 6 months in advance in accordance with the 'Staying\_Put' policy. The consideration of the request for funding such an arrangement would be appropriate for the access to Resource Panel to consider as set out in section 8 below.

## 5. Education, Training and Employment

### **5.1 Further and Higher Education**

The Route 21 Service will offer financial support for care leavers through at least one course of both further and higher education of their choice until they are 21 years old, or until the end of a programme of education or training, if that has been previously detailed in the pathway plan. A programme of education is defined as that which is agreed and detailed previously within the Pathway Plan.

Costs may be met for:

- Registration and Examination fees
- Textbooks and essential equipment related to the course specified as essential up to the value of £200
- Activities essential to meet course requirements as agreed by the service manager
- Public transport between accommodation and course center if over 1 mile for 1<sup>st</sup> month of course only. After this costs of transport should be met from 16-19 bursary fund if in receipt of this. If payment is unusually high due to placement change beyond the young person's control or the suitable course location or if bursary is paid via vouchers rather than money consideration can be given to supporting part of the cost but that would normally be deducted from incentive payments.
- Transport costs to open days & college interviews
- Specific clothing, including clothes for interview and essential equipment related to the course

Provision of 1 laptop up to the value of £350 if required for the course.

### **5.2 Further Education (to include A levels, B tech and equivalent)**

The Route 21 Service will assist young people to apply for college 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, personal allowances may be paid. Accommodation may also be provided, or the means to secure it, to a maximum of the relevant Local Housing Allowance rates.

### **Incentives**

An incentive of £10 per week for those in continuing education will be paid for those under Leaving Care Finance Policy

21 years, or until the end of the programme of further education commenced before 21.

For full time courses, to qualify for the payment, a young person must achieve 80% attendance. For part time courses, if attendance is more than 80%, the young person will receive an incentive at £5.00 per week.

These arrangements will continue until the end of the course of study they are undertaking even if that continues beyond their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday

Incentives will be paid at the end of each term in arrears when attendance has been verified by the Route 21 worker.

Care leavers are eligible to receive a collage bursary of £1,200 a year from the 16-19 Bursary Fund. Details about the Bursary can be seen at <http://www.education.gov.uk/>. Bursary awards are managed by the colleges and are targeted towards the costs of transport, meals, books and equipment. The colleges may use their discretion to make awards to young people in the way that they feel best fits the needs and circumstances of their students. Therefore arrangements vary from college to college. Receipt of a bursary is conditional on the student meeting agreed standards set by the college for example, relating to attendance and/or standards of behavior. Awards to students undertaking courses lasting less than 30 weeks are made on a pro-rata basis.

Further information can also be found about the Bursary Fund on the Department for Education website <http://www.education.gov.uk/>

### **5.3 Higher education**

Grants and loans are available to all students.

In addition Local Authorities are obliged to pay a bursary of £2,000 to young people in Higher Education. The Route 21 Worker will arrange for this to be paid in installments over the length of the course. Negotiations could take place regards different payment frequency so that shortage of funds during the summer months is avoided.

The deposit for the 1<sup>st</sup> year's accommodation is provided by Route 21.

A Maintenance Grant is available to help with living costs for people whose household income is low via student finance. The maximum Maintenance Grant available is

£3,250 for 2012/13

For people who get or qualify for Income Support or Housing Benefit they may get the Special Support Grant instead of the Maintenance Grant. The amount is the same as that available through the Maintenance Grant.

People are likely to qualify for the Special Support Grant if:

- They are a single parent
- Their partner is also a student
- They have certain disabilities

Eligibility for the Special Support Grant does not affect how much can be accessed through the Maintenance Loan. It will also not be counted as income when working out entitlement to income-related benefits or tax credits.

This grant is non-repayable.

Repayable Student Loans for fees and living costs are also available. Both may be applied for at the same time through the [Student Loans Company](#).

If there is a delay in this being paid after term starts, a transitional payment from the Route 21 service will be considered until the student grant/loan is available. Arrangements about the reimbursement of this payment will be made on a case by case basis and recorded in the Pathway Plan. The student loan company guarantees loan payments and grants being in place so long as applications are made by the deadline set so it is expected that use of this support is exceptional.

Some Universities and Colleges also pay Institutional Bursaries and extra bursaries for students who have been in care. The Who Cares Trust provide a guide to what different universities offer.

The Route 21 Service will assist in applying for all these and also to charitable organisations for any additional funding.

The Route 21 Service will provide support for travel to and from university during term time, and the means for transporting a care leaver and their belongings to and from university at the beginning and end of terms, if required.

The Route 21 Service will provide vacation accommodation (or the money to secure it to a maximum of the relevant student accommodation in the area for holidays during the course, except for the time leading up to the first term, or after the last term unless this has been agreed within the Pathway Plan based on support needs to cover the period after the degree and before graduation i.e. September. During summer vacation only a needs assessment would inform requests for maintenance payments in line with section 8 below.

During the holidays, if a return to an ex-foster carer or lodgings provider is agreed, then payments to the carer will be made in line with staying put arrangements. A contribution must be paid to the carer by the young person for food and utilities. The staying put policy and approvals for requests outside these procedures (8 below) would be applied.

#### **5.4 Training**

Incentives for those engaged on a non-employed training course will be paid at the same rate as for those in further education but must be agreed on a case by case basis by the Route 21 Team Leader.

#### **5.5 Care leavers returning over the age of 21**

Young people previously eligible for Route 21 services, resuming programmes of education or training after the age of 21 are entitled to support from the Route 21 Service. They will have been told this when their involvement with the Route 21 Services ended and they will have been sent the leaflet and informed of that prior to their service at Route 21 ending.

<http://resources.leavingcare.org/uploads/011f84b4af85da8b047744e2ab0afa84.pdf>

Support can be available for as long as the young person continues with the agreed education or training programme even if this goes beyond their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Programmes 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 for a First Degree; or participation in vocational training and apprenticeships. Support would be provided for up to the equivalent of 1<sup>st</sup> degree level only.

Where a care leaver requests this support, an assessment will be carried out of the appropriateness of the education or training course for them given their level of ability, the purpose of undertaking the course and how it will help them to find employment in

the future. The assessment 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, which will have been set out in Pathway Plans up to age 21.

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.

The maximum payable will be maintenance at the equivalent of the personal allowance and accommodation costs at the relevant Housing Allowance rate. Incentives, festival and birthday allowances will not apply.

If financial support is given, it will be dependent on attendance and the Route 21 worker will need to check on this with a contact at the university or college.

## **5.6 Employment**

All care leavers will be supported through at least one move into the employment of their choice.

Costs may be met by the Route 21 Service for:

- Suitable clothes for interview purposes
- Transport costs to interviews
- Specific clothing/uniform
- Start up equipment, including health and safety equipment
- Transitional payments where there is a gap between benefits and receipt of first salary or wage.

Apprenticeships are available to care leavers and the payment from them is at a level that can mean them receiving payments that are at a level lower than that they would receive if they were on a part time course with less prospects. The Pathway plan review that considers the arrangements when a change of education, training or employment takes will take that into account and additional payments can be considered within that to aide care leavers in making the transition from being fully supported to then being financially independent but on a reduced wage.

## **5.7 Unpaid work experience, voluntary work and positive employability related activities**

Incentives and other related costs for those engaged in these activities may be paid and will be at the same rate as those in further education. This will be agreed on a case by case basis by the Route 21 Team Manager.

### **6. Health & Wellbeing**

#### **6.1 Health costs**

Care leavers under the age of 19 and in full time education will generally be exempt from the majority of National Health Service health charges. For others they may claim assistance via the National Health Service Low Income Scheme. The young person will need to complete forms HC1 (SC) and HC1

Lone Parents and Sick and Disabled young people in receipt of Income Support or Employment & Support Allowance will be exempt from National Health Service prescription, dental charges and sight tests charges by virtue of their Income Support or Employment & Support Allowance claim.

Full details of the help available is in leaflet HC11 'Help with health costs?' which is available from main post offices, Jobcentre Plus offices, National Health Service hospitals and some National Health Service practitioners.

Forms can be obtained from Jobcentre Plus offices, National Health Service hospitals and from some doctors, dentists and opticians or by contacting the National Health Service Forms order line on 0845 610 1112 or by email at [nhsforms@spsl.uk.com](mailto:nhsforms@spsl.uk.com).

More information is available from the Health Cost advice line on 0845 850 1166.

Requests from young people for assistance over and above the basic provided by the above will be considered on a case by case basis e.g. if there is a need for a young person to have particular spectacle frames due to their employment or training rather than the basic minimum, or they need complex orthodontic treatment which is not covered by benefits. This does not include treatment for cosmetic reasons.

6 week taster sessions for gym membership are available and if that is assessed as being of benefit to the young person ongoing funding for that can be agreed through the Pathway Leaving Care Finance Policy

Planning process.

## **6.2 Counselling or therapeutic needs**

For young people under the age of 18 a referral should be made to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service.

For those over 18, the young person would need to be referred to their GP. Counselling may be available via them.

For young people with needs arising from mental health difficulties Community Care services may provide support. Eligibility for adult social care provision is governed by the Department of Health Guidance on *Eligibility Criteria for Adult Social Care (2010)*18.

It is not appropriate for the Route 21 Service to fund counselling or other services arranged privately and not in association with the above.

Requests for finance to cover travel to appointments or for any other related cost will be considered on a case by case basis.

## 7. Specific groups of care leavers and those with additional or specific needs

### **7.1 Care leavers who are parents**

#### **7.1.1 Living Costs**

A pregnant 16/17 year old young woman will continue to receive their personal allowance until her baby is born. A payment of £150 for expectant Mothers and £75 for expectant Fathers to enable the purchase of pregnancy related items / maternity clothing will be provided by Route 21. Thereafter Mothers, if lone parents, are entitled to Income Support, Child Tax Credit and Child Benefit, although not Housing Benefit or Local Housing Allowance. This applies regardless of the young person's care status, i.e. on a Care Order, subject to S20 or discharged from S20. The Route 21 service will assist in making these claims at the appropriate time with the Under 18s Benefits Advisor. Benefits received will replace the Route 21 Personal allowance.

#### **7.1.2 Maternity Grant**

Care Leavers on benefits or a low income may be entitled to a Sure Start grant of £500 to purchase what is needed for their baby. This can be accessed via their community midwife

and claimed from 11 weeks before the birth until the baby is 3 months old. It may not be payable until after the baby is born, in which case the Route 21 service may arrange an advance. This grant is non-repayable and does not affect other benefits or tax credits. Further information is available from <https://www.gov.uk/>

#### **7.1.3 Childcare Costs**

There is help available towards the costs of childcare. If the young person is under 20, Care to Learn could pay up to £160 per child per week towards the young person's childcare and travel costs while they are learning.

If the young person is aged 20 or over and studying at a school sixth form or sixth form college, they could get help with their childcare costs through the Sixth Form College Childcare Scheme.

If the young person is an out-of-work parent aged 20 or over with a partner who's working, they could get help with their childcare costs through the Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work scheme; [click here](#) for more information.

If all of the above provisions are exhausted consideration can be given in exceptional circumstances to support being provided from Route 21.

#### **7.1.4 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 starting to live with them. Thereafter the payments are made automatically.

For young people in receipt of living allowances in line with benefit rates who are not parents any increase in benefits made by the DWP at times of cold weather would be matched. An alert system for when this happens will be put in place with Jobseekers Plus.

### **7.2 Care leavers who are disabled**

16/17 year old sick and disabled care leavers who meet the criteria may be able to claim  
Leaving Care Finance Policy

Income Support or Employment & Support Allowance and some other benefits such as Disability Living Allowance. However they cannot claim Housing Benefit or Local Housing Allowance. Claiming Income Support is a pre- requisite for a number of other benefits and services so should be applied for where possible. The Route 21 Service will assist the young person in making the relevant claims.

Information about Disability Living Allowance is available from the Benefit Enquiry line 0800 882200, from [www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk), and also from [www.disabilityalliance.org](http://www.disabilityalliance.org).

For 16 and 17 year olds, full costs of supported accommodation will be paid for, and the support element of Disability Living Allowance awarded will not be taken into account. The young person will be encouraged to use the money to aid their life opportunities or to save towards future needs. The mobility part of Disability Living Allowance however will be taken into account when awarding travel payments/tickets.

Where a young person over 18 and is in supported accommodation, the support element of which is not funded by Community Services or adult social care, the young person will be expected to contribute to the support element of their care from the support element of Disability Living Allowance. Similarly the mobility part of the Disability Living Allowance taken into account when awarding travel payments/tickets.

### **7.3 Care leavers in custody**

Young people in custodial settings will not receive full personal allowances but will generally be paid £20 per month. This is because they will not have the usual expenses of living in the community and there are usually opportunities for the young person to earn some money. If this is not the case, exceptions can be made with the agreement of the Route 21 Team Manager but primarily the rationale for making the payments is in relation to maintaining a supportive stance and involvement with young people as a corporate parent. Festival allowance will continue to be paid. Transport from custody will be arranged or paid for by the prison service and any immediate needs on release considered within the Pathway Plan.

## **7.4 Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people and / or young people without recourse to public funds**

Please also see Coventry's procedures manual regards Unaccompanied **Asylum Seekers**, available from the Children's Social Care Intranet pages.

16 and 17 year old Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking young people living in supported accommodation will receive funding from the Route 21 service as for all other care leavers.

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 he/she has 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.

UASC who do not have Refugee Status/Indefinite Leave to Remain are not eligible to claim an Education Bursary but may be able to make use of the 'Care to Learn Fund'.

Where young people have limited leave to remain (usually Discretionary Leave), or are appealing an adverse decision, or for any other reason linked to immigration status cannot access public funds the Route 21 service will consider funding education courses that finish in the academic year prior to their status expiring. This will enable young people to complete courses and gain qualifications which they can use on returning to their country of origin. The assessment around whether this support is provided will include consideration of the ability to complete the course in light of the likelihood of returning to the country of origin.

In the case of higher education the Access to Resource panel would need to consider the matter as set out in Section 8 below.

For young people 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 Route 21 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.

Whilst the above is applied from a human rights perspective the LA still holds a duty regards former relevant children to the extent that their welfare requires it. That can include financial payments in exceptional circumstances which include the risk of the young person being completely destitute without it.

If there is eligibility for financial support via NASS care leavers would be supported to make the applications and the agreed support would continue until such a time as it was being received from NASS.

## **7.5 Young People who return home and young people living at home**

On returning home, the young person's parent/s are able to claim all benefits and tax credits if the child is under statutory school leaving age or, if over that age, undertaking full time education or training. The parent will be expected to make the relevant claims and provide financial support for their son/daughter from that. Also, parents who are in work and earning over the tax credit limit will be expected to support the young person.

However, if the parents cannot access benefits/tax credits, and can produce evidence of an application that has been refused, and the young person is under statutory school leaving age, the Allocated Case Worker and relevant manager will assess need and Leaving Care Finance Policy

decide whether or not to offer any financial assistance.

For those over statutory school age, similarly all benefits should be claimed and if they can not be accessed a Personal Allowance may be paid to the young person. The Route 21 Service will assess need and make that decision. However the remainder of the range of Leaving Care allowances, setting up home allowance, festival payments and incentives etc. will not apply, with the exception of essential requirements in relation to Education Training or Employment. The amount payable will be decided on a case by case basis and should include a means test and the outcome should be recorded in the Pathway Plan.

If a return home is unsuccessful and the young person reverts to eligible or relevant status they would be treated financially as any other care leaver.

## **7.6 Young people in receipt of Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA) payment**

Young people will 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. In some circumstances finance to assist in the setting up of a trust fund would be considered.

## **7.7 Young people with other income**

If a young person is in regular receipt of an income (for example, from parents/relatives, interest on an inheritance), the first £15 per week of this will not be taken into account for the purposes of payments from the Route 21 Service.

## **7.8 Qualifying young person**

For care leavers who qualify for advice and assistance under section 24(2), the primary financial support role for those not in employment lies with the Department for Work and Pensions; however, local authorities may also give financial assistance which may be in

kind or, in some circumstances, in cash to these young people on account of their particular needs over and above those of other young people until they reach the age of 21, or 25 where the young person is engaged in education or training. This needs to be assessed on a case by case basis by the Team Manager Route 21.

Young people who are or have been in an SGO placement or privately fostered are included within those defined as qualifiers.

Route 21 will make concerted efforts to contact all qualifying young people on a 6 monthly basis to establish whether they may be in need of assistance.

Qualifying young people who access higher education are entitled to support with vacation accommodation in line with 5.3 above.

### **7.9 Young People that have been made subject of SGO's**

If a young person has been subject of an SGO they are entitled to the same support as that set out in 7.8 above. If during the negotiations within the court processes the LA have given assurances or commitments around leaving care support levels whether that is in terms of finance or practical support those agreements will be honoured. These commitments should be made clear to the Route 21 service by the SW team that made them, by legal services and / or the IRO.

### **7.10 Staying Put**

If a young person is in a staying put arrangement the Staying Put Policy applies. Entitlements for leaving care support are in line with those set out in this policy and contributions towards living costs are negotiated in line with the staying put policy.

## **8. Financial Requests over and above / outside the entitlements set out above**

There will often be funding and support needs that young people present with that are not covered within this policy. In those cases the service manager for Route 21 will consider each request after the PA or SW has set out the arguments for and against making a payment following an assessment and provided an analysis and recommendation about that and after the relevant team manager for Route 21 has provided robust challenge to that and either endorsed or explicitly not supported the application. The positions of the Allocated worker and Team manager will be set out in the financial request form.

Upon receipt the service manager will either approve or deny the request setting out reasons. In some circumstances where there is no precedence or if the amounts involved are large the decision may be referred to the access to resource panel chaired by a Leaving Care Finance Policy

manager at the designation of the head of service or above so that it can be underwritten or for a decision to be made at that level.

## **9. Information regarding the entitlements**

The entitlements inquiry completed in November 2013 by the all – party parliamentary group for looked after children and care leavers found that information to young people about their entitlements highlighted the need to ensure that young people are made aware of their rights and entitlements in a timely and person centred way.

A letter written by a manager from Route 21 will be sent or passed to Young People when they are 15 years and 6 months old, when they are 17 years and 6 months old and when they are 20 years and 6 months old. The letter will refer them to sources whereby they can obtain information about the entitlements and changes to them such as the CCC website [Services for care leavers: Route 21 Team - Care Leavers - Coventry City Council](#). The allocated case worker will also ensure that the young person is supported to consider the information with their support and that should take place in a way that is helpful to the particular needs of the young person. Other people involved with the young person should be included as much as possible and they should be supported to help the young person seek clarity about any points and the Pathway Plan review is a key opportunity to ensure that. As well as at the above points information about entitlements must be discussed explicitly with the young person on a regular basis (at least at each Pathway review and Once in between) and that should be recorded on PROTOCOL.

It is accepted that the information as set out in this document would not serve as a young person friendly document and summary information that provides the information is available on the website link noted above within this section.

