



Care Leavers' Financial Entitlements

Guidance to help you know what's available, whether you're going on to further education, an apprenticeship, work or are looking for a job

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Introduction

This document explains what support you will receive from Slough Children’s Services Trust if you are aged 16 to 21 (or up to 25 if still in education), and you are looked after or receiving leaving care services from us.

The new Care leavers’ Financial Entitlement Policy will be effective from 3rd April, 2017 and sets out the types of financial support you can expect to receive from the Trust.

The Trust will support and act as a Corporate Parent until you are 18, which is when the law recognises you as an adult rather than a child. However, our support doesn’t end there and we’re here to guide you and offer you help and advice when and if you need it.

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 advises that young people need ongoing support for the first few years of their adult lives. The Trust will help you towards independence and support you to achieve your full potential, through education, training and employment.

The Trust can, in some cases, provide financial support too but only where:

- there is an assessed need
- the request is reasonable and our resources allow.

As the Trust has limits to how we can provide additional financial resources to you, it is really important for you to meet with your social worker or personal advisor and share your views in your Pathway Plan about what support you need. Then we can help you plan for the future.

Where we are unable to financially support you, we will provide clear information as to the reasons why the decision has been made. If you don’t co-operate with your agreed Pathway

Plan, or if your behaviour leads us to believe the financial support will not be used appropriately, we will have to review the arrangements in your plan.

The Trust will make sure you are listened to and if you need more information details can be found on our website. Look for Your Service > My Future at www.scstrust.co.uk.

1. Young People who are Eligible for Financial Support

The level of support you will receive from the Trust is dependent upon which category you fit into as defined in the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

If you are unsure which category you come under, please ask your social worker or personal advisor to explain.

Have you had at least 13 weeks of being looked after since you were 14, some of which has been since your 16th birthday? If the answer is YES, then you belong to one of the following categories:

1.1. Eligible Child

If you are 16 or 17 and still in care then you are what is called an '**eligible child**'. If you are an eligible child you will have a Pathway Plan when you are 16 saying how the Trust will help you get ready for leaving care and adulthood.

1.2. Relevant Child

If you are 16 or 17 and leaving care then you were an 'eligible child' and have now become what is called a '**relevant child**'. If you are a relevant child, the Trust must provide you with a Pathway Plan which covers support around a suitable place to live and enough money to live on.

1.3. Former Relevant Child

The Trust must continue to provide you with housing and living (subsistence) allowances until you are 18 and become a '**former relevant child**' (usually referred to as a care leaver). The Trust must maintain regular contact with you, help you with your Pathway Plan and help you achieve your personal goals.

The Pathway Plan will be reviewed at least every six months and more often if necessary. A personal advisor will be appointed to help you, if you don't already have one. You will receive support until you are 21, or longer (this can be up until you reach 25) if you are still in education or training.

It is important for you to work closely with your allocated social worker or personal advisor to make sure that your Pathway Plan is reviewed at least every six months. If your circumstances change, then your worker will review your Pathway Plan even if that's less

than six months since the last review. The Trust may not agree to requests for financial support if they haven't already been agreed in the Pathway Plan.

If you are unhappy with the information recorded in your Pathway Plan, please ask your social worker or personal advisor to make it clear to you as soon as possible. If you still feel unhappy, please ask to speak to your worker's manager, to the Trust's participation officer, or to an advocate (we can provide you with details).

1.4. Qualifying

Young people who are aged 16 – 21 and were looked after on or after their 16th birthday and no longer looked after, but had spent less than 13 weeks being looked after since the age of 14. You can remain a qualifying young person when aged 21 – 24 if you continue on an education or training course.

2. Financial Support for 16 and 17 year olds

For most young people aged 16 and 17, the Trust will pay for your accommodation, give you a Living Allowance and support you financially with a range of needs including education, training or employment.

The Trust will pay a Living Allowance into your bank account at a rate equivalent to **Income Support (IS)** or **Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)** or Universal Credit depending on where you live. From April 2017 to March 2018 this amount is £57.90 per week. If you have to pay a service charge out of this to your accommodation provider, the amount should be stated in your Pathway Plan. If you do not have a bank or building society account, please talk with your worker about setting one up.

If you find it difficult to manage your money, we will offer budgeting advice. If you often run out of money, we may give you smaller, more frequent sums of cash or go to the shops with you instead of paying your Living Allowance directly into your bank or building society account.

If you are on a training course where a weekly allowance is paid directly to you, we will not pay the Living Allowance. However, if the weekly payment is less than £57.90 we will pay the difference.

If you are a 16 or 17 year old parent, you will probably claim benefits from the DWP and tax credits from HM Revenues & Customs for your family's living costs, but we will continue to pay for your housing until your 18th birthday. You can still ask the Trust to help you with the costs associated with education, training and employment. Please talk to your worker about the benefits and tax credits you can claim.

2.1. National Insurance Number

If you are aged 16 or over and you do not have a National Insurance number, please talk to your worker about how you can get one before your 18th birthday. It will be very difficult to get a job or welfare benefits without a National Insurance number.

If you came to the UK as an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child, then you may not be able to get a National Insurance number due to your immigration status. This is something that is controlled by the Department for Work and Pensions and not Children's Services.

2.2. Discretionary Payments

All payments above the Living Allowance and housing costs paid by the Trust are discretionary and not an entitlement. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 sets out the priority areas for discretionary funding above the Living Allowance. The priority areas are:

- Education materials and special equipment
- Costs associated with needs (such as a disability)
- The costs of childcare
- Clothing
- Contact with family or other significant relationships
- Cultural and religious needs
- Counselling and therapeutic needs.

It is important to talk to your worker about any needs or plans you have and make sure that your Pathway Plan records any requests or agreed funding.

Discretionary payments must be agreed by the consultant social worker or group manager. All such payments will be monitored and reviewed to ensure no individual or group is unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged by the administration of discretionary payments. A record of such payment will be kept on the general budget system and individually on file records.

If you have any specific needs that are not covered in this policy, we encourage you to talk with your worker. Your worker will talk with the consultant social worker about your request and do an assessment if necessary.

2.3. 16-19 Education Bursary

All young people aged 16-19 who attend full time education in school or college will be supported by their worker to make a claim for a college bursary. The amount you receive will depend on good attendance. You could be eligible to receive up to £1200 annually paid to you by the school or college.

2.4. Birthdays

On your 16th and 17th birthdays, if you live in semi independent accommodation, the Trust will give you £20. This could be in vouchers, an item or (if agreed) cash. If you're living in supported accommodation or independently on your 18th birthday and 21st birthday, the Trust will give you £40.

If you are in foster care or residential placement the costs towards your birthday allowance will be agreed between the Trust and your carers.

2.5. Religious Celebrations

For 16 and 17 year olds in semi independent accommodation whatever your religion, faith or belief, we will give you a cash payment of £20 once a year to contribute towards any celebration you may wish to make.

If you are in foster care or residential placement the costs towards your festival allowance will be agreed between the Trust and your carers.

3. Savings

3.1 Junior ISAs and Child Trust Funds

All children looked after continuously for more than 12 months will have either a Child Trust Fund (CTF) (if born between 1 September 2002 and 2 January 2011) or a Junior ISA administered by an independent organisation – the Share Foundation – on our behalf. These are government-backed accounts which are opened with an initial payment from the government of £200. You cannot remove the money from these accounts until you are aged 18.

Full details of entitlement, amounts and how you can access your savings after you turn 18 are in our Children Looked After and Care Leavers Savings Policy. Please ask your PA for further details..

3.2 Bank Accounts

Every child looked after is entitled to have a bank account set up for them, set up when you first come into care. Your Independent Reviewing Officer will check that this has been done. Again, speak to your PA if you are unsure.

4. Approaching Eighteen

After your 18th birthday, the Trust will continue to encourage and support you to become more independent. The Trust will no longer be able to pay you a Living Allowance you will need to talk with your worker about the welfare benefits you will need to claim and the documents you need to support your benefit claims.

Instead of receiving a Living Allowance from the Trust, from the age of 18 most *former relevant children* will claim Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance from the Jobcentre (or universal credits depending on where you live). To get Income Support, you need to be studying for 12 hours or more per week, or be a lone parent, or be able to provide medical certificates from your GP confirming that you are too sick to work.

Otherwise, you will need to claim Jobseeker's Allowance (universal credit). The amount of money you receive on Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance is the same - £57.90 per week paid directly into your bank account. However, to get Jobseeker's Allowance, you will

need to sign at the Jobcentre every two weeks and show that you are actively seeking full time work.

Instead of your housing being paid by The Trust you will become responsible for your housing costs, but you can claim Housing Benefit (universal credit) from the local authority where you live if you are getting Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance, or if you are working on a low income.

You should also ask your worker whether you will be responsible for Council Tax and whether you need to apply for Council Tax Benefit or Council Tax exemption

If you know what your address will be on your 18th birthday, you can claim Housing Benefit up to 13 weeks before your 18th birthday.

If you are eligible for welfare benefits, then you are not eligible for any Living Allowance after your 18th birthday. As the Jobcentre usually takes around two weeks to process claims for Income Support (IS) and Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA), we will lend you, on a discretionary basis, Living Allowance for up to two weeks after your 18th birthday. You will be asked to repay this money when welfare benefits are subsequently backdated so that you are not paid twice for the same period.

If your claim for IS or JSA has not been processed within two weeks and you have no money to live on, we will help you apply to the Jobcentre for an Advance Payment. If the Jobcentre refuses to give you an advance payment, you can ask us for an Emergency Payment. Your worker will discuss your request with the consultant social worker or group manager.

If you get welfare benefits and your circumstances change, you must immediately tell the Jobcentre and the Housing Benefit department (and any other agency from which you receive money or benefits). Otherwise, you might be overpaid benefits, which the Jobcentre or Housing Benefit department could make you pay back. A large overpayment of Housing Benefit could lead to your housing provider evicting you from where you live. A few common examples of changes of circumstances (there are lots more) which you must tell benefit agencies about are:

- Starting work, even if you only work a few hours per week (some young people believe that if they work for less than 16 hours per week this will not affect their benefits and that they do not need to tell the Jobcentre. This is not true)
- A change in your immigration status
- Moving home
- Starting or finishing a full time college or university course.

If you are an unaccompanied asylum seeking child who has been granted leave to remain only until you are 17 ½ or 18 years old, you should ask your legal representative if you can apply for further leave to remain before your original period leave expires. You will only be able to claim welfare benefits after your 18th birthday if you have made an application for further leave to remain before your original period of leave to remain has expired.

If you have exhausted all your immigration appeal rights and you are unlawfully present in the United Kingdom, you will not be able to claim welfare benefits after your 18th birthday. It may become unlawful for us to continue supporting you financially after your 18th birthday. Therefore, we must carry out an assessment under the European Convention on Human Rights to decide whether it is lawful to continue to give you a Living Allowance and pay for your housing, as well as additional financial support.

5. Financial Support for Former Relevant Young People Aged 18+

The main aim of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 is to ensure young people's transition from care is managed with suitable support and you are ready to leave. As mentioned above, our support to young adults aged 18+ focuses on encouraging you to become independent and reaching your full potential through education, training and employment.

Our duties to give you financial help under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 usually end on your 21st birthday. However, we can continue to give you financial help past your 21st birthday, until the age of 25, if you are still in education or training. This will need to be discussed and agreed as part of your Pathway Plan review.

5.1. Money to Live on After Your 18th Birthday

After your 18th birthday, the Trust will continue to encourage and support you to become more independent. As the Trust will no longer be able to pay you a Living Allowance you will need to talk with your worker about the welfare benefits you will need to claim from Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and the documents you need to support your benefit claims.

Care Leavers aged 18 plus and not employed, will be expected to apply for **Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) or Universal Credit depending on where you live**. You will need to sign at the Jobcentre every two weeks and show that you are actively seeking full time employment or work.

Alternatively, to be eligible for **Income Support (IS)**, you need to be studying for 12 hours or more per week, or be a lone parent, or be able to provide medical certificates from your GP confirming that you are too sick to work.

You will need a National Insurance number to claim welfare benefits. If you do not have a National Insurance number, please ask your worker to help you apply for one as soon as possible.

If you are eligible for welfare benefits, then you are not eligible for any Living Allowance after your 18th birthday from the Trust. The Jobcentre usually takes around two weeks to process claims for IS and JSA. The Trust will lend you, on a discretionary basis, Living Allowance for up to two weeks after your 18th birthday. You will be asked to repay this money when welfare benefits are backdated to you, so that you are not paid twice for the same period.

If your claim for IS or JSA has not been processed within two weeks and you have no money to live on, we will help you apply to the Jobcentre for an **Advance Payment**. If the Jobcentre

refuses to give you an advance payment, you can ask us for an Emergency Payment from the Trust. Your worker will discuss your request with the team manager.

If you get welfare benefits and your circumstances change, you must immediately tell the Jobcentre and the Housing Benefit department (and any other agency from which you receive money or benefits). Otherwise, you might be overpaid benefits, which the Jobcentre or Housing Benefit department could make you pay back.

A large overpayment of Housing Benefit could lead to your housing provider evicting you from where you live.

Examples of changes of circumstances which you must tell benefit agencies about are:

- Starting work, even if you only work a few hours per week
- A change in your immigration status
- Moving home
- Starting or finishing a full time college or university course.

If you are getting Income Support because you are studying for 12 hours or more per week in further education (not university), you can continue to get Income Support if your course continues past your 19th birthday. Your Income Support will continue until either your 20th birthday or until the 'terminal date' following the end of your course (usually 31 August).

If you start a different course of 12 hours or more per week after your 19th birthday, you cannot continue to get Income Support. You will not be able to get Jobseeker's Allowance or Housing Benefit. It is very important you talk to your worker as soon as possible if you think you will want to start a new course or move to a different college after your 19th birthday.

You must show your worker how a new course or a different college is essential for you to make progress towards your chosen career. Your worker can explain the financial implications and will record the discussion in your Pathway Plan. It is unlikely the Trust will pay you a Living Allowance or pay for your housing if this has not been agreed well in advance by the team manager and recorded in your Pathway Plan.

If you start a course of 12 hours or more per week before your 19th birthday, which continues after you turn 20 years old, you will not be able to get Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance or Housing Benefit from your 20th birthday. If you want to continue your course after your 20th birthday, you must talk to your worker at least six months before your birthday (ideally before the course begins).

Your worker will ask the team manager whether the Trust can pay you a Living Allowance and pay for your housing for the rest of your course. The team manager will ask the group manager and the decision will be recorded on your Pathway Plan. If you do not make sure that your request for financial support is agreed in your Pathway Plan at least six months before you need it, the Trust is unlikely to agree, and you may have to leave your course before it finishes.

6. Support for Former Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People

The Trust's Care Leavers' Financial Entitlements Policy recognises that we have a duty to provide equal opportunities to young people who have come to the United Kingdom from other countries, as far as legislation permits us. Where legislation makes it difficult for us to provide financial support, for example due to your immigration status, the Trust will always look for alternative ways to try to act equitably and fairly.

If you came to the UK as an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child, and have an asylum claim that is still ongoing, then this may affect your entitlement to benefits and financial support, even once you are over 18. Many young people are not able to access benefits even when they are 18 and will instead receive money from the Trust until their asylum case is determined.

When you turn 18 there is less financial support available as you are no longer considered to be a child. You can talk to your worker about what financial support you can get but be prepared that it may be less than you have been used to as a child under 18.

If you are an **unaccompanied asylum seeking child who has been granted leave** to remain only until you are 17 ½ or 18 years old, you should ask your legal representative if you can apply for further leave to remain before your original period leave expires. You will only be able to claim welfare benefits after your 18th birthday if you have made an application for further leave to remain before your original period of leave to remain has expired.

If you have **exhausted all your immigration appeal rights** and you are unlawfully present in the United Kingdom, you will not be able to claim welfare benefits after your 18th birthday. It may become unlawful for the Trust to continue supporting you financially after your 18th birthday. Therefore, we must carry out an assessment to decide whether it is lawful to continue to give you a Living Allowance and pay for your housing, as well as additional financial support.

If your support with the Trust ends whilst you are still waiting for the outcome of your asylum claim then you will be referred to another service such as Refugee Services and National Asylum Support Service (NASS) who can support you to apply for accommodation and financial assistance.

7. Emergency Payments

If you urgently need money for basic living costs you should talk to your worker. If your benefits have stopped, your worker will help you to contact the Jobcentre to resolve any problems. If it takes time to resolve problems with the Jobcentre, your worker may, with the approval of their manager, lend you money for basic living costs for a short period of time.

You must agree in writing to repay any money the Trust lends you to help you survive while your benefits are not being paid. Any lack of cooperation with your worker's efforts to help you with your benefit problems will lead to us stopping emergency payments.

If you urgently need money for a different reason, for example your money has been stolen or lost, or your belongings have been damaged in an accident, your worker may, under exceptional circumstances and with their manager's approval, give you a small amount of

money to help you cope. The Trust will refer you to local charities such as Foodbank if required to help during emergencies.

8. Maternity Grant

If you are expecting your first baby or you are having a multiple birth, and you are in receipt of Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance, you can apply to the Jobcentre for a Maternity Grant up to 11 weeks before your baby is due or until 3 months after the baby is born. You will get a Maternity Grant worth £500 for you to buy essential items for your baby.

If you are not eligible for the Maternity Grant, the Trust will pay you a £500 Maternity Grant instead. We consider essential items for a new born baby to be:

- Cot
- 3 sets of bedding
- 4 sets of clothing
- Sterilisers and bottles, if needed (we encourage breastfeeding)
- Buggy, rain cover and cosytoes
- Baby bath
- Baby wipes and baby toiletries
- Nappies (disposables or re-useable).

If possible, you should try to save some of your Maternity Grant for when your baby gets bigger and you need to buy items such as larger clothing, safety equipment and toys.

Your worker will also offer to help you get good quality, second hand baby and toddler items if you would like. Your baby will grow out of things very quickly, so if you can get some things for free you can make your Maternity Grant last for much longer.

9. Loans, Debts and Fines

We strongly advise young people not to take loans or credits cards from banks or building societies. If you run into problems, we will help you get advice from a debt advice organisation but we will not pay your debts.

If you are fined for a civil or criminal offence, we can help you negotiate with the relevant organisation for a manageable way for you to pay your fine. We will not pay your fines.

The Trust will run workshops to help understand how to budget and manage your finances and this will be beneficial for your independence skills and living on your own and you will be encouraged by your worker to attend.

10. Housing

There is a range of accommodation available to care leavers. Each type has different levels of support and we hope that you can be offered accommodation that best suits your needs and have some choice in the type you move into.

Until your 18th birthday, your housing will have been paid by the Trust. However, from your 18th birthday almost all young people become responsible for paying their own rent. (If your immigration status prevents you from working or claiming Housing Benefit, we may agree to continue paying your rent.)

If you are receiving Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance, or if you are working on a low income, you can claim Housing Benefit from the local authority where you live.

You should also ask your worker whether you will be responsible for Council Tax and whether you need to apply for Council Tax Benefit or Council Tax exemption. If you know what your address will be on your 18th birthday, you can claim Housing Benefit up to 13 weeks before your 18th birthday.

After your 18th birthday, The Trust has no duty to house you (except for providing and/or funding vacation accommodation if you are at university or in residential further education).

Housing is not free. You must be aware of how much your rent is and make sure that you get Housing Benefit to pay your rent. You must work with your worker to resolve any problems you might have with your rent or Housing Benefit as if your rent is not paid, you could lose your home.

In deciding your accommodation needs, your background and wishes will be taken into consideration. The Trust will provide you with support and prepare you for living independently, as we hope that later on you will be ready to move into your own housing. However, if you do not stay in the housing we provide, or you do not accept our support, we may ask you to leave the housing.

If you lose your home because you behave badly or have not paid your rent, we cannot guarantee to find alternative housing for you. Furthermore, it is unlikely that the local authority's Homelessness Assessment Team will help you to find somewhere new to live.

10.1 Paying Your Rent If You Are Working

If you are working, you will need to pay all or some of your rent, depending on how much you earn. If you do not earn much money, your worker can help you to apply for Housing Benefit to help with your rent.

If you find you are having problems paying your rent, you must talk to your worker as soon as possible to agree on a plan to help you stay in your home. If you do not pay your rent you will lose your home.

11. Setting up Home Allowance / Leaving Care Grant

If we are satisfied that you are ready to move into independent housing, and you are moving into a new home which is unfurnished or only partly furnished, we will give you a Setting Up Home Allowance / Leaving Care Grant.

The maximum the Trust will pay is up to £2000. You will need to show your worker your tenancy agreement. If you are moving into shared accommodation, the Trust will reduce the amount we give you according to how many items you need to buy for your new home.

Before we give you a Setting up Home Allowance / Leaving Care Grant, you can make an application online to your local authority for a cooker, fridge or a new bed if you are in receipt of benefits and live in borough. Your worker will help you with this. This is known as the **Local Assistance Scheme**.

Before buying any items for your new home, you must get agreement from your worker, and provide receipts to your worker. Orders for furniture and household items can be placed and invoiced through The Trust. You must buy essential items for your home before buying non-essential or luxury items. Essential items include (if not provided with your accommodation):

- Bed and mattress
- Storage for clothing e.g. wardrobe and/or chest-of-drawers and/or clothes rail
- Sofa or armchair
- Table and chairs
- Fridge and cooker (which must be fitted by an approved and registered contractor)
- Carpets or rugs
- Curtains
- Bedding and towels
- Lamp and lampshade
- TV (if you have a TV you must also, by law, buy a TV licence)
- Cutlery, crockery, cooking utensils and kettle
- Iron and ironing board
- Mop, broom, dustpan and brush plus a vacuum cleaner if you have carpets, bin
- Washing bowl and dish drainer.

12. Deposits and Rent In Advance for Private Rented Housing

We help young people to find somewhere suitable to live. We prefer to help you find housing through the local authority, or from a housing association. However, in exceptional circumstances or if there is no other funding available the Trust may consider helping you to get privately rented housing.

Your worker would need to get agreement from the group manager before we can advance you any money to pay a landlord or letting agency for a deposit and/or rent in advance. Any

money we advance to you for this purpose would be deducted from your Setting up Home Allowance / Leaving Care Grant and would be written into your Pathway Plan.

12.1 Damage to Housing or Property

You must not damage your housing or your landlord's property. You are also responsible for the behaviour of your friends and guests. You may have to pay for any damage you or your guests cause to your home or your landlord's or neighbours' property. Ideally, you will agree to pay for any damage in a payment plan set up by your worker.

13. If you are in Prison or a Young Offenders' Institution

If you are in prison or a young offenders' institution, your welfare benefits will stop. We can give you up to £20 per month to help you buy toiletries and phone cards etc. We will pay you by postal order to the Governor with your name on the reverse. We will visit you regularly and help you plan ahead for leaving prison. While you are in custody, we can help you to safely store your belongings. However we cannot be held liable for any loss or damage to your belongings.

14. Employment

The Trust can help you while you are looking for work. Here are some examples:

- We can link you with the youth service advisors who can help you to complete applications forms and CVs
- We can practice interview skills with you
- We can give you information on education, employment and training opportunities
- We can pay for your travel costs to job interviews, although your social worker or personal advisor will check first whether you can get help with this from the Jobcentre

- The Trust can give you one-off payments of up to £200 to buy suitable clothing for an interview or for a job, although we will check first whether you can get help with this from the Jobcentre
- The Trust can give you advice and support to get on to a college course which may increase your work opportunities. We can help you with information on employment training schemes or apprenticeships. We can help you negotiate with the Jobcentre to get on to the New Deal for Young People or the New Deal for Lone Parents

Any funds and support agreed must be recorded in your Pathway Plan and reflect your efforts to seek employment in a chosen field.

After you get a job, you may still be able to get financial help from the Trust. Make sure that you speak to your worker and record the request and decision in your Pathway Plan.

For example, you may wish to study part time alongside your job in order to improve your future job prospects. If you need help paying the course tuition fees or you need extra money to pay for travel, books or equipment, and there are no other sources of funding, please talk with your worker. Make sure that your request for financial help, and the decision from the team manager, is recorded in your Pathway Plan.

If you get a job, you will need to pay towards your rent. As soon as you start work, you must tell the Housing Benefit department. If you work part time or your job is low paid, you may still be able to get some Housing Benefit to help you with your rent. You must give your payslips to the Housing Benefit department so that they can work out your Housing Benefit entitlement. You will have to pay the proportion of your rent which is not paid by Housing Benefit.

You must tell the Housing Benefit department immediately if your wages or salary go up or down or if you leave or change your job.

If you do not pay the right amount towards your rent, you risk being evicted from your housing. If you become “intentionally homeless” because you have not paid your rent, it may be very difficult for you to find somewhere else to live.

15. Travel Expenses

If you are attending a course of education then we may be able to help with the travel costs to and from the course. However if you decide to stop studying then this means travel expenses will have to stop.

16. Course Fees

When researching what course you want to do, ask the college about tuition fees. If you have to pay tuition fees, you must discuss this with your worker and have the discussion recorded in your Pathway Plan reviews.

This discussion should ideally begin at least three months before your course begins, so that you and your worker have enough time to fully explore all potential sources of funding. For example, you may be eligible for Discretionary Learner Support Funds (DLSF). You can also get advice on funding from the Educational Grants Advisory Service.

If you cannot find any other funder to pay your course fees, you can ask the Trust to consider paying the fees. We will pay for your course fees only if:

- You have fully explored alternative sources of funding
- You have begun discussing this with your worker before the course begins (ideally at least three months before)
- Your Pathway Plan shows that the course is essential for you to progress along your chosen career path; and

- You can demonstrate at least 85% attendance on any previous course of education or training.

17. Support from the Virtual School

Children looked after or care leaver young people aged 16-19 are entitled to a number of financial and supportive services from the Virtual School Team. Such services would include:

- Transitional advice and guidance for all Year 11 students to help learners receive tailored advice to suit their skills and consider what options they are able to study in Year 12.
- Virtual School will work with your social workers and PAs to carry out 3 personal education plan (PEP) meetings a year for 16 + young people in education and help support with the completion of the associated E-PEP documents
- Through the PEP process young people 16+ can access funding for equipment and trips if it is deemed to aid their education but this is accessed on an individual basis and must be requested through the E-PEP targets section
- Virtual School will monitor attendance and attainment of all 16+ young people in education which will enable the Virtual School to identify young learners struggling to cope much sooner and discuss with you suitable support
- A 16+ Virtual School advisor will provide ongoing advice, support and intervention for 16-19 year olds to make sure you reach your full potential and help you achieve your goals and access higher education options
- The Virtual School and Apprenticeship Team have worked collaboratively to offer 16+ young people the opportunity to access an apprenticeship in Slough Borough Council or the Trust. Some young people have successfully been accepted on to apprenticeship schemes and get first hand experience of working in a professional work setting. The Trust will continue to explore apprenticeship opportunities to more young people.
- Support is also provided for young people wishing to attend university by the way of helping learners pick their subjects, complete their personal statement and access university workshops.

17.1 Essential Equipment and Activities

Your college has special funds to help students pay for essential equipment and activities connected to your educational course or training. You can ask your worker to help you apply to your college's Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF).

If your DLSF application is refused, you can ask the Trust to help you instead. We can give an allowance of up to £100 per academic year to help you buy essential equipment or pay for

activities connected with your course. Before we agree to pay, we will check with your college that the item or activity is essential and that your attendance has been over 85%. You should make sure your request is recorded in your Pathway Plan.

If you want to start a course for which essential equipment and activities will cost more than £100, and you would want the Trust to pay for these, please speak to your worker and record the request in your Pathway Plan as soon as possible (ideally at least three months) before the course begins.

To raise more funds, we can help you apply to educational trusts and charities. Organisations listed at the back of the Care Leavers' Handbook (please ask for a copy or read it under Your Service/My Future on our website – www.scstrust.co.uk) can give further information.

17.2 Books

We will pay up to £50 per academic year for books which your course tutor confirms are essential, and which you cannot get from the library or pay for by other means, such as DLSF, on condition that your attendance is at least 85%.

17.3 Child Care Costs While Studying or Training

If you are a parent of a young child, and you are on a college or training course, you will probably be eligible for the Care to Learn scheme. To get Care to Learn, you must be under 20 years old on the day your course begins. As long as you begin your course before you are 20, Care to Learn will contribute towards your childcare costs until your course has finished.

Care to Learn will pay up to £175 per child per week. This money includes costs for childcare (you will need to use an Ofsted registered childcare provider), registration fees and travel costs. Whilst on the Care to Learn scheme you will also be eligible for Allowance for Education and Training. You should apply for Care to Learn before the course begins and your worker will help you with this.

If you are over 20 when your course begins, you could get help with your child care costs from the Sixth Form College Childcare Scheme or from your college's Discretionary Learner Support Fund.

If you cannot get help with child care costs from anywhere else, you can ask the Trust to help you. You should talk to your worker about this before you begin any course and ensure that this is recorded in your Pathway Plan. To encourage you to participate in education and training the Trust will always try to meet reasonable costs. Your worker will talk to the team manager about your request. We will disregard Child Benefit payments when deciding whether to give you extra financial support.

18. Financial Help For Higher Education and University

Propel is a great website for any care leavers thinking of going on to higher education. Run by the Become Charity, the Propel website helps you choose a course, offers advice on funding and loads of support and other care leavers' inspiring stories. Visit the website to find out more www.propel.org.uk

As mentioned above your worker, in consultation with the Virtual School, will offer to accompany you to university open days and admission interviews and will also help finance any travel costs that are incurred.

As soon as you have been offered a university place, make sure you meet with your worker and the Virtual School to discuss student finances applications. Applications should be made by 31st May of each year to ensure that finance is available at the start of the first academic term.

On the “Application for Student Finance” form, students should apply for and tick:

- Maintenance Loan (maximum amount)
- Tuition Fee Loan
- Maintenance Grant (maximum amount)
- Other sections if you are a young parent or disabled
- Care leaver identification.

The maintenance loan and maintenance grant are intended to cover your living costs and your housing costs and so you need to budget for 52 weeks of the year with this money.

Students will also be eligible to apply to the National Scholarship Programme, which is administered by individual Universities and in some circumstances for other University bursaries. Most universities have dedicated services and advisers for care leavers so you should arrange to meet with the university’s welfare department to discuss what is available.

The Frank Buttle Trust offers grants to young care leavers now at university. Your worker can help you to apply for this grant if and other similar grants if eligible.

Lone parents will be able to apply for a Parent’s Learning Allowance and a Childcare grant. Due to the variation in the amount of financial support students will receive, individual assessments will be undertaken for each student.

19. Higher Education Bursary

If you want to go into higher education you are able to access a university bursary of £2000 from the Virtual School which comes in three instalments of £666 every year of study. Additionally, the Virtual School will help you access additional in-house university funding as well as any other support or mentoring resources available in the institutions. The bursary will be dependent on your attendance at university.

19.1 Out Of Term-Time Accommodation while in Higher Education or University

We will help you negotiate with your university to stay in student accommodation during the holidays. If this is not possible, we will help you find alternative short-term accommodation during holiday periods. We will pay for your out of term-time accommodation.

When you graduate from university, we will pay for the hire of your cap, gown and two photographs.

You must meet with your worker at least once a term and once during holidays. We will pay for your travel costs for these meetings.

19.2 Working while Studying in Higher Education

You can work for as many hours as you wish as long as you do not harm your studies. Many students take part time jobs to increase their income.

19.3 Students From Other Countries

If you have lived in the United Kingdom for less than three years, you must have Refugee Status or Humanitarian Protection to be eligible for Student Finance.

If you know you want to go to university, you should plan well ahead to make sure it will be possible. If you think you might not be eligible for Student Finance, you should research alternative ways of using your time well.

For example, if you have to defer university entry for a year, consider finding work in your chosen field or studying part time. Please talk to your worker as early as possible if you hope to go to university to avoid the possibility that you may be disappointed at the last minute.

The Helena Kennedy Foundation runs an award called Article 26 which works with a small number of universities who are committed to supporting those seeking asylum or with DLR to access higher education.

20. Discretionary Payments

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 sets out the priority areas for discretionary funding. The priority areas are:

- Travel costs e.g. for education
- Education materials/special equipment
- Other educational costs
- Costs associated with needs (such as a disability or pregnancy)
- The costs of childcare
- Clothing
- Contact with family or other significant relationships
- Cultural/religious needs
- Counselling and therapeutic needs
- Hobbies/holidays.

Discretionary payments must be agreed by the consultant social worker or group manager. All such payments will be monitored and reviewed to ensure no individual or group is

unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged by the administration of discretionary payments. A record of such payment will be kept on the general budget system and individually on file. It is important to talk to your worker about any needs/plans you have and make sure that your Pathway Plan records any requests/agreed funding.

Should you have any needs that are not covered in this financial policy we would encourage you to talk with your worker. Your worker will talk with the Consultant social worker about your request.

21. Young People with a Disability

We will work closely with the Trust Disabled Children's Services and Adult Services to make sure you are able to get the support and transition services you need.

If you have a disability, language difficulty or specific additional needs then these will be taken into consideration when assessing the level of financial support you will need.

22. Contact With Family Or Other Significant Relationships

We will support you to maintain contact with people who are important to you.

For young people who are not from the United Kingdom and who have family and friends in other countries we can give a monthly international calling card worth up to a maximum of £10. We will support you to use the Red Cross International Tracing and Messaging Service.

For young people who have significant relationships with family and friends in the United Kingdom, we may give you a travel warrant for you to visit loved ones. We will also consider other requests. We will ask to speak with the person you want to visit before we give you the travel warrant. Your worker will need to talk to the team manager about your request.

23. Physical and Mental Health Needs

The Trust will help you get services for any physical or mental health needs you may have. For example, we may pay for your travel costs to appointments and we may accompany you if you wish. Please talk to your worker and make sure any request for help is recorded in your Pathway Plan.

Most 16 and 17 year olds are eligible for free health services. If you are not automatically entitled to free health services, you should complete an HC1 form. The HC1 takes about a month to be processed and then you will receive a HC2 certificate giving you free or very low cost health services. The HC2 has to be renewed every six months. Additional payments will be considered by your worker for necessary health needs.

24. Special Interests, Special Aptitudes, Holidays and Passports or Travel Documents

The Trust encourages you to take part in a range of activities and will provide you with a leisure card so that you can take part in leisure activities at sites across Slough at reduced costs.

If you have a special talent in music, sport, the arts or another field, which you need extra money to pursue, we can consider a wide range of requests. You should talk with your worker about any request for funding and make sure this is recorded in your Pathway Plan.

The Trust cannot usually pay for young people to go on holiday. However, we may pay for trips which form part of your educational course or which give you an important opportunity to pursue a special interest for your career. We will ask you to apply to your college's Discretionary Learners' Support Fund before we consider your request. Please make sure that your request is recorded in your Pathway Plan.

Most young people will already have a passport by the age of 18 if you do not discuss with your worker about how this can be arranged for you. However, you cannot get a passport or travel document if you are an asylum seeker or if you only have Discretionary Leave to Remain in the United Kingdom. If you are granted Refugee Status or Humanitarian Protection, please ask your worker to pay for your application for a passport or travel document.

24. Provisional Driving Licence, Driving Lessons, Driving Test, Cycling

The Trust cannot usually pay the full cost of the provisional driving licence, lessons and test. However, if you can show that you need to learn to drive in order to follow your education, training or career path, then we will consider contributing up to a maximum of £300. You will need to discuss your request with your worker and you must ensure that your request and reasons are recorded in your Pathway Plan.

If you can show that you need to cycle to your place of education, training or employment, the Trust will consider making a contribution up to a maximum of £350 for the cost of a bicycle, helmet, lock and lights.

Speak to your social worker or personal advisor about other avenues you can explore, such as charities which support care leavers and may be able to help with costs such as driving or cycling lessons.

26. Approaching your 21st Birthday

From your 20th birthday onwards, your worker should talk with you about what will happen after your 21st birthday.

After you turn 21, our duties towards you under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 will usually end. However, if you are still doing a course of education or training which has been agreed in your Pathway Plan, we can continue to give you financial help past the age of 21 for the duration of the course.

The Trust will have given you a lot of support and encouragement for the first three years of your adult life from 18 to 21. Once you reach 21, we will expect most young people to be able to live and support themselves independently.

However, if you still have support needs, for example you have a physical or learning disability, substance misuse or mental health problems, we will help you get appropriate services from other organisations. Please make sure that your needs are recorded in your Pathway Plan.

If you are living in the Trust's supported housing, we will help you plan where to live after your 21st birthday. You may wish to apply for the Setting up Home Allowance/ Leaving Care Grant which will be up to £2000.

If we have been paying your Living Allowance and housing costs because your immigration status prevents you from working or claiming welfare benefits or Student Finance, we will advise you on whether you can apply for support from somewhere else after your 21st birthday.

The following legislation, documents and organisations have been referred to in the formulation of this document.

- Children Act 1989
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 Regulations and Guidance
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Supporting Care Leavers: A Training and Resource pack for people working with young people leaving care (DH)
- Care Matters: Time for Change
- Slough Children's Services Trust 5 Year Action Plan
- Achieving for Children: Financial Provision for Care Leavers
- Become Charity

