

# Financial support policy for young people aged 18+ who are either looked after or receive leaving care services from the Kingston and Richmond councils

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## Introduction

Every young person aged 16 to 21 (or up to 25 if still in education) who is looked after or who receives leaving care services from the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames and the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, should receive a copy of this policy from their social worker or personal adviser (their worker).

This policy does not apply to young people who are still living with a foster carer or in a residential home

The aim of this policy is to explain to young people the types of financial support they can expect to receive from Kingston and Richmond councils via Achieving for Children's (AfC's) Leaving care Services.

AfC will look after you and act as corporate parent until you are 18 years old, which is when the law recognises you as an adult rather than a child. However, the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 also recognises that young people continue to need parental support for the first few years of their adult lives. So, after your 18th birthday, and until you are aged 21 (and for as long as up to age 25 if you continue in education), we will help you towards independence and support you to achieve your full potential, through education, training and employment.

We want to help and support young people reach adulthood and independence successfully and most do this with varying levels of support. However, it is important to remember that we can only provide financial support where the request is reasonable and our resources allow. It will be difficult for us to provide additional financial resources to young people who are not co-operating with agreed arrangements or whose behaviour leads us to believe money will be not be spent appropriately or wasted.

Kingston and Richmond councils are required by law to provide equal opportunities to all young people, regardless of their gender, race, disability, religious belief or sexual orientation. This financial support policy explicitly acknowledges 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 equal opportunities, we will always look for alternative ways to try to act equitably and fairly, where we are unable to do so, we will provide clear explanations.

At the back of this policy is a list of useful organisations that you can contact for further advice and information.

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# 1 Young people who are eligible for financial support

The level of support you will get from Achieving for Children doesn't just depend on how old you are. It is also 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 worker to explain as it can seem quite complicated.

**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 children's services will help you get ready for leaving care.

## 1.2 Relevant child

If you are 16 or 17 and leaving care then you were an eligible child and have now become a **relevant child**. If you are a relevant child, the local authority must provide you with somewhere suitable to live and enough money to live on.

## 1.3 Former relevant child

The local authority must continue to provide you with accommodation and subsistence money until you are 18 and become a **former relevant child** (often referred to as a care leaver). The local authority must maintain contact with you, assist you with your pathway plan and help you achieve the goals in it. The pathway plan will be reviewed at least every six months and more often if necessary. A personal adviser will be appointed to help you. You will receive support until you are 21, or if you are staying in education or training the support will continue until that ends.

It is important for young people to work closely with their worker to make sure that thorough reviews of pathway plans are done at least every six months. If your circumstances change, then you should ask to review your pathway plan with your worker even if six months have not yet passed. AfC may not agree to requests for financial support that have not already been agreed in the pathway plan.

If you feel unclear or unhappy with the information recorded in your pathway plan, please ask your worker to make it clear to you as soon as possible. If you still feel unclear or unhappy, please ask to speak to your worker's manager or the looked after children's participation officer. We want you to know as early as possible whether we will agree or decline financial support, so that you can make alternative plans if necessary.

## 2 Support for Former Relevant young people aged 18+

The main aim of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 is to delay young people's transitions from care until they are prepared and ready to leave. Therefore, our support to young adults aged 18+ focuses mainly on encouraging you to become independent and on helping you to fulfil your potential through education, training and employment.

Our duties to give you financial help under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 usually end on your 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. However, we can continue to give you financial help past your 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, if you are in education.

### 2.1 Money to live on after your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday

After your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, we will continue to encourage and support you to become more independent. As we 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.

Care Leavers aged 18 + and not employed, will be expected to apply for **Job Seekers 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 work. You will also be expected to put your name on the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) marker for care leavers to ensure that you receive extra support and training from the Jobcentre. You will also be prioritised for employment.

Alternatively, to be eligible for **Income Support (IS)**, you need to be studying for 12 hours or more a week, 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 urgently.

If you are eligible for welfare benefits, then you are not eligible for any living allowance after your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. As the Jobcentre usually takes around two weeks to process claims for IS and JSA, we will lend you, on a discretionary basis, living allowance for up to two weeks after your 18<sup>th</sup> 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 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. A few common examples of changes of circumstances that you must tell benefit agencies about follow (there are lots more).

- Starting work, even if you only work a few hours a 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 belief is false.
- 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 a week in further education (not university), you can continue to get Income Support if your course continues past your 19<sup>th</sup> birthday. Your Income Support will continue until either your 20<sup>th</sup> birthday or until the terminal date following the end of your course (usually 31 August).

However, if you start a different course of 12 hours or more a week after your 19<sup>th</sup> birthday, you cannot continue to get Income Support. You will not be able to get Jobseeker's Allowance or Housing Benefit either. It is very important that 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 that we 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 strategic manager and recorded in your pathway plan.

If you start a course of 12 hours or more a week before your 19<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. If you want to continue your course after your 20<sup>th</sup> 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 AfC can pay you a Living allowance and pay for your housing for the rest of your course. The team manager will ask the strategic 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, AfC is unlikely to agree, and you may have to leave your course before it finishes.

## **2.2 Support for former unaccompanied asylum seeking young people**

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 Achieving for Children.

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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. It may become unlawful for us to continue supporting you financially after your 18<sup>th</sup> 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.

If your case with children services closes whilst you are still waiting for the outcome of your asylum claim, then you will be referred to another service such as Refugee Action Kingston or The Refugee Council who can support you to apply for accommodation and money.

If you are deported back to your country of origin whilst your case is still open, AfC will provide you with £500 setting up home allowance in your country to assist with your relocation.

A weekly bus pass will be provided on your oyster card to enable you to get to college or to seek employment. This will be reviewed after three months and may be withdrawn in circumstances where it is evident that you are not using it for this purpose.

You will be provided with a phone card totally £10 a month so you can contact your family.

### **2.3 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 we lend 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.

## **2.4 Maternity grant**

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

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

- a cot
- three sets of bedding
- four sets of clothing
- sterilisers and bottles, if needed (we encourage breastfeeding)
- a buggy, rain cover and cosytoes
- a baby bath
- baby wipes and baby toiletries
- nappies (disposables or re-usables)

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.

## **2.5 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 to pay your fine. We will not pay your fines.

## **2.6 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 support needs and have some choice in the type you move into.

Until your 18th birthday, your housing will have been paid by AfC's children's services. However, from your eighteenth 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 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, you can claim Housing Benefit up to 13 weeks before your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

After your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, AfC's children's services have no duty to house you (except for providing or funding vacation accommodation if you are at university or in residential further education).

Our housing is not free. You must pay your rent yourself or 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. We 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 promise 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.

## **2.7 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.

## **2.8 Setting up home allowance and the 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 or leaving care grant. The maximum we will pay is up to £2,000 but is likely to be a lot less than this. You will need to show your worker your tenancy agreement. If you are moving into shared accommodation, we 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 or 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 AfC.

We encourage you to obtain as much furniture as possible from the furniture project in New Malden, Hounslow or Twickenham. The furniture project provides good quality, second hand furniture which complies with British safety standards for an exceptionally low price.

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 such as wardrobe, chest of drawers 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
- alarm clock
- 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 Hoover if you have carpets, bin
- washing bowl and dish drainer

## **2.9 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 we may consider helping you to get privately rented housing. Your worker would need to get the agreement of the strategic 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 or leaving care grant and would be written into your pathway plan.

## **2.10 Damage to housing or property**

You must not damage your housing or your landlord's or neighbours' 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.

## **2.11 If you are in hospital**

If you are in hospital, your welfare benefits will stop after 12 weeks. We can give you up to £20 a month to help you buy toiletries, stamps and paper to write letters, buy clothes and snacks, cut your hair and purchase phone cards. We will visit you regularly, help you with any problems and help you to plan ahead for leaving hospital. While you are in hospital, we can help you to safely store your belongings. However we cannot be held liable for any loss or damage to your belongings.

## **2.12 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 a 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.

## **2.13 Employment**

We can help you while you are looking for work. Here are some examples.

- We can help 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 (please make sure you have an Oyster card) although we will check first whether you can get help with this from the Jobcentre.

We 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.

We can give you advice and support to get onto 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 onto 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 AfC. Make sure that you speak with 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.

#### **2.14 Travel expenses**

If you are attending a course of education, then we may be able to help with the travel costs to and from this course. However, if you decide to stop studying then this means that any travel money given to you to travel to college will also stop.

#### **2.15 Course fees**

When researching what course you want to do, ask the college about tuition fees. If you will have to pay tuition fees, you must discuss this with your worker and have the discussion recorded in your pathway plan and 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, whose details are listed at the end of this policy.

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

- you have fully explored alternative sources of funding; and
- you have begun discussing this with your worker before the course begins (ideally at least three months before); and
- 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.

## **2.16 Essential equipment and activities**

Your college has special funds to help students pay for essential equipment and activities connected to your course of education 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 AfC 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 intend to ask AfC to pay for these, please speak with 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. There are some useful organisations listed at the back of this policy (for example, Educational Grants Advisory Service) can give further information.

## **2.17 Books**

We will pay up to £50 per academic year for books that 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%.

## **2.18 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 an 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 AfC 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 AfC 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.

## 2.19 Financial help for higher education and university

**Propel** provides full information about each educational institution's provision for care leavers, helping you make an informed choice about the right course at the right institution for you. It will also help ensure you access all the support to which you are entitled thus reducing the numbers of care leavers forced to drop out.

Your worker 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 to discuss student finances. Applications should be made by 31 May of each year to ensure that finance is available at the start of the first term.

On the Application for student finance form, students should apply for and tick:

- the maintenance loan (maximum amount)
- the tuition fee loan
- the 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.

## 2.20 Higher education bursary

If you are in higher education, you will be eligible to receive a higher education bursary paid by AfC of £2,000 for the duration of your course. This will be paid in termly instalments.

### **2.21 Vacation accommodation while in higher education or university**

We will help you negotiate with your university to stay in student accommodation during vacations. If this is not possible, we will help you find alternative short-term accommodation during vacations. We will pay for your accommodation during vacations.

When you graduate from university, we will pay for your cap, gown and two photographs, one of which will be for AfC.

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.

### **2.22 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.

### **2.23 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. There are more details on their website: [www.hkf.org.uk/article\\_26.php](http://www.hkf.org.uk/article_26.php)

### **2.24 Discretionary payments**

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

- travel cost, for education, etc
- education materials or 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 or religious needs
- counselling and therapeutic needs
- hobbies or holidays.

Discretionary payments must be agreed by the Team Manager or Strategic 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 policy we would encourage you to talk with your worker. Your worker will talk with the Team Manager about your request.

### **2.25 Birthdays**

A birthday allowance will be paid to all care leavers who are living in supported accommodation or independently. The amounts available are as follows:

19 <sup>th</sup>	£20
20 <sup>th</sup>	£20
21 <sup>st</sup>	£40
22+	£20

### **2.26 Young people with a disability**

We will work closely with AFC's Disabled Children's Services to make sure you are able to get the support and 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.

### **2.27 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 with the team manager about your request.

### **2.28 Physical and mental health needs**

We 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.

AfC will fund £20 monthly gym membership if you have a disability or have a mental health need.

### **2.29 Special interests and aptitudes, holidays and passports or travel documents**

We encourage 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 the borough 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.

We 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 or aptitude. 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. 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.

### **2.30 Provisional driving licence, driving lessons, driving test, cycling**

We 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 £350. 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, AfC will consider making a contribution up to a maximum of £350 for the cost of a bicycle, helmet, lock and lights.

### **2.31 Approaching your 21<sup>st</sup> birthday**

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

We 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 AfC supported housing, we will help you plan where to live after your 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. You may wish to apply for the setting up home allowance or leaving care grant which will be up to £2,000.

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 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.

### 3 Reference documents

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

- 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
- Children's Rights Officer's Association
- London Borough of Hounslow: Young People's Guide to Financial Assistance 16-17 year olds
- London Borough of Hounslow: Young People's Guide to Financial Assistance 18 + years old
- London Borough of Richmond upon Thames: Financial Provision for Care Leavers
- City of London: Allowances (for 16+ looked after children and care leavers)
- Can the State be a Good Parent?
- The National Leaving Care Advisory Service (NLCAS)
- If this were my Child - A Councillor's guide to being a good corporate parent
- Rainer Foundation - What makes the difference?
- Quality Protects Programme – to ensure that young people leaving care, as they enter adulthood, are not isolated and participate socially and economically as citizens
- Royal Borough of Kingston's Children and Young People's Plan 2006/2010
- Royal Borough of Kingston's Children and Young People's Participation Strategy 2006
- National Leaving Care Advisory Service
- The Fostering Network
- The Who Cares? Trust

**April 2016**