

FINANCIAL SUPPORT POLICY

For eligible, relevant and former relevant young people

The purpose of this policy is to set out the financial arrangements for eligible, relevant and former relevant young people. This policy does not apply to eligible young people who remain in foster care or residential placement.

Former relevant young people will receive financial support through employment, benefit or training allowances. They may also receive additional assistance from Neath Port Talbot as outlined further in this policy.

All on-going financial support will be set out in the young person's pathway plan and approved by the team manager.

It will be clear to the young person and to anyone reading the plan what financial support will be given.

Payments made under leaving care legislation will not affect other benefits young people may be entitled to such as education maintenance allowance and disability living allowance /personal independence payment.

The value of the weekly maintenance payments will be set out in this policy and reviewed on an annual basis.

A financial needs assessment must be completed with the young person as part of the pathway assessment and prior to any payments being approved.

ELIGIBLE AND RELEVANT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (Category One and Two – Social Services and Well-being Act 2014)

For the purposes of this policy, Eligible young people refers to Looked After Children who are residing in supported accommodation, Supported Lodgings or independent accommodation. Eligible young people in foster care will continue to be supported through fostering payments. Eligible young people residing with parents under Placement with Parent regulations will be supported by the parent with whom they are living.

Weekly Maintenance Allowance (WMA)

A baseline figure is set for a weekly maintenance allowance. Young people earning more than £75 per week will have their maintenance payments reduced by 20% of their net income.

Maintenance payments will be expected to cover the following costs :-

- *Food*
- *Clothing*
- *Personal Toiletries*
- *Utilities*
- *Leisure activities*
- *Transport*

(Refer to Discretionary payments for additional payments).

Support with accommodation costs

Eligible Children

If an eligible child is living in independent or semi-independent accommodation, their financial support will be in line with those payable to relevant children.

Payments can be made either via BACS directly to the young person's bank account or in person in cash.

Young care leavers age 16-17 (Relevant young people) who move into independent living will have their accommodation costs paid by NPT.

In the rare cases where it is deemed appropriate for a 16 or 17 year old LAC or relevant Young Person to move into their own property - Due to our statutory duty to provide accommodation, NPT will pay the bond for a property that is deemed appropriate and where the rent falls within Housing Benefit rates. NPT will also be liable for the rent until the young person turns 18 years old, when the tenancy will transfer to their name and they will need to fund the rent themselves or via Housing Benefit. The bond must be paid directly to the landlord and confirmation provided that the bond will be held in a Deposit Protection Fund. Registration details for the deposit are to be provided to NPT. Written agreement must be in place with the landlord or agent that the bond is to be returned to Route 16.

Accommodation should be suitable and subject to the accommodation suitability checklist being completed by the YPA with the YP. Funding will be agreed once suitability has been confirmed.

For Former Relevant young people moving into privately rented accommodation, the cost of a bond or deposit should be secured from a bond board or via Housing Options. In exceptional circumstances a cash bond or deposit can be paid from the young person's setting up home grant inline with the process outlined above. The bond will be paid back into the young person's setting up home grant at the end of the tenancy.

An inventory of the property must be carried out by the Social Worker or YPA in the case of privately rented properties. This must be signed by the young person and the

landlord and a copy placed on the young person's file. This should be referred to in the event that the landlord wishes to make a claim against the bond.

Payments will normally be made direct to the landlord and must be supported by invoices.

Even where Relevant children are entitled to claim benefit e.g. lone parents and young people with disabilities, they cannot claim housing benefit and therefore the local authority will be responsible for accommodation costs. An additional WMA top-up payment will be paid to these young people where their income level falls below that of other relevant children.

Service charge

Young people under the age of 18 who are residing in supported lodgings or supported accommodation will be responsible for paying their own service charge from their WMA.

Utility allowance

The utility allowance is paid to young people living independently where they are responsible for paying their own fuel bills. This may be paid in the form of tokens.

18th Birthday payments

If a young person is residing in supported accommodation, independent living or supported lodgings when they reach the age of 18 years old, they will be provided with the equivalent birthday allowance of a young person in foster care. This can be provided in cash, vouchers or gifts as appropriate. If it is not deemed appropriate for the young person to receive this due to their personal circumstances then the money can be held for them.

Maternity Payment

Pregnant young women unable to claim a Maternity Grant, due to being unable to claim benefits in their own right until after the birth of their baby, will be entitled to a maternity allowance from the Authority of £500.00.

(This will be payable from three months prior to the birth of the baby). This payment is to be revised each year to allow for inflationary increases.

Reconnect to care

If a young person approaches the Local Authority for support under Reconnect to Care then Social Work Duty will undertake an Initial Assessment to determine what level of support the young person should receive. This support will be agreed through the management chain and will be subject to regular review. (Please see separate policy for more information)

When I am Ready

The financial arrangements relating to the When I am Ready Scheme and Post 18 Living Arrangements are contained within the When I am Ready Financial Arrangements document.

FORMER RELEVANT CHILDREN (Category Three – Social Services and Well-being Act 2014)

When a care leaver reaches the age of 18 years, maintenance and accommodation payments cease. The young person will be supported to access the benefit system including housing benefit. Applications for benefits should be made 4 – 6 weeks prior to the young person attaining the age of 18 years old to ensure there is no delay to payment commencing.

Where a young person experiences a period without income due to benefit delays, an interim benefit payment of £25 per week will be made.

Wherever possible, repayments should be made to the Local Authority when backdated benefit money is received.

Supported Lodgings Payments - housing benefit and top up

Where a young person is residing in Supported Lodgings paid for by NPT Local Authority, it is the expectation that the young person will apply for Housing Benefit, if eligible, and that the Local Authority will be responsible for paying only the top up where applicable.

Young people will be expected to make a minimum £15 per week contribution towards their Supported Lodgings placement. (*Supported Lodgings Guidance 4C's*)

Emergency Accommodation

In rare, crisis situations, when a young person requires emergency accommodation, this must be sourced via Housing Options. It is their legal duty to provide this accommodation, as care leavers have Priority Need status, and once they have accepted a duty they have to follow strict guidelines in order to assess the young person's housing need and support the young person on to suitable accommodation. (Housing Act 2014)

Only if a young person has no other form of accommodation available to them, as Housing Options have discharged their duty and all other viable options have been explored, would a case be put forward for Route 16 to fund the use of B&B on a short term, discretionary basis. This would require Team Manager or Principal Officer approval.

Further education

Young people in full-time education or training post 18, who are unable to claim benefits, will continue to receive financial assistance until their course is complete.

Young people aged 19 and over may claim a Welsh Government Learning Grant.

Enrolment Fees

Route 16 will pay for the college Enrolment fee for young people who are not residing with their parents. There is an expectation that where a young person resides with someone with PR (or formerly with PR) then they will financially support them. Where this is not possible, support will be considered on a case by case basis and will be at the discretion of the management team.

Higher education

Young people aged 18 and over in Higher Education will be supported to claim all applicable Welsh Government grants, student loans and a higher education bursary as well as any other assistance available from the Local Education Authority and other bodies.

As they are unable to claim benefits NPT will pay a weekly maintenance allowance and utility payment, if applicable. NPT will also pay accommodation costs during term holidays.

Educational Trips

For looked after children in foster care, the holiday allowance should also cover the cost of school trips. Carers must ensure that children in foster care are afforded the opportunity to take part in school trips although it is recognised that this does not include carers funding expensive school trips abroad. (Please see Fostering Financial Policy)

For other young people, education trips should be funded via the Learning Support Fund. Where this is not applicable, funding for compulsory , educational trips will be provided by Route 16.

Setting up Home Payments (Leaving Care Grant)

- Setting up home-up payments are for the purpose of establishing a young person in independent accommodation and purchasing furniture, appliances etc.
- The Setting Up Home grant is discretionary and allocation of funds is based on circumstances and need. Payments should not be viewed as an entitlement for all care leavers irrespective of need.
- A maximum grant is payable to each care leaver. This will not be paid in full to any young person when they first leave care and some young people may never need the whole amount.
- Payment will be agreed, according to the type of accommodation and associated initial needs.

- Where a young person is likely to be in temporary accommodation, some leaving care grant should be held in reserve so that money is available when the young person has a permanent home of their own. There will also be cases where a young person fails in their first attempt at independent living and a reserve fund is necessary so that they can start again.
- Payments should be made based on individual needs as assessed in the individual Pathway Plan.
- The maximum level of grant as at 1st April 2016 has been set at **£1,750**. VAT may be reclaimed on purchases made by the authority on behalf of a young person.
- The grant may be paid in installments or, exceptionally, as a lump sum at any time between the ages of 16 –21 (25 for those in Higher Education) however planning for the use of the grant, if required, should take place well in advance of the young person's 21st birthday. The grant shall be utilized to purchase required items and will not be provided in cash.
- A list of items purchased from the grant with the signature of the young person confirming receipt must be kept on the young person's file.

When a young person moves into their first tenancy, they will be supported to purchase basic food, hygiene and cleaning products for the home to a maximum value of £50.

Identification

Route 16 will purchase the first post 16 years passport, a copy of their birth certificate and a provisional driving license for young people. Young people will be expected to pay for replacements if they lose these items.

Eye Tests and Glasses

Young people qualify for a free NHS-funded sight test and an NHS optical voucher which provides help with the cost of glasses or contact lenses, if:

- They are aged 16, 17 or 18 and are in full-time education
- receive Income Support
- receive Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (not Contribution-based)
- receive Income-based Employment and Support Allowance
- are awarded Universal Credit
- are entitled to, or named on, a valid NHS tax credit exemption certificate
- are named on a valid NHS certificate for full help with health costs (HC2)

Looked after and relevant young people will be entitled to the basic costs of glasses. Additional costs for designer frames etc will be met by the young person.

Former relevant young people who do not meet the criteria above will be expected to purchase their own glasses via their income source.

Gym Passes

Young people residing in NPT will be provided with a gym pass via the service level agreement with Celtic Leisure. Where Looked after children reside out of county in residential or foster care their health and leisure costs should be met via their placement.

Where Relevant and Former relevant young people reside out of county and are not in a financial position to fund gym or leisure centre membership, there should be exploration of any subsidised membership schemes via the Jobcentre, Local Authority or Youth Service in their area. Where no such scheme exists, the young person will be provided with basic gym membership to be reviewed on a monthly basis.

Computers/Laptops

All foster carers would have access to a computer that young people can use in order to complete any college or school work. In addition, it is recommended that young people are supported to save their pocket money, or use their birthday and Christmas present allowances, towards expensive items such as laptops.

Route 16 have a small number of refurbished laptops that we are able to loan to young people for the purpose of completing coursework. These remain the property of Route16 and would need to be returned to the team. Young people will be expected to sign an agreement in relation to this.

Driving lessons

For young people who are or who have the prospect of working, need to drive for that purpose, and have the means to obtain and maintain a vehicle, support will be given to apply to charitable sources for funding to access a course of driving lessons. If these funding streams are not available, Route 16 will fund a set of ten driving lessons from an approved instructor following the young person successfully passing the Theory and Hazard Perception Test. The young person will be expected to fund the Theory and Practical tests.

DISCRETIONARY PAYMENTS

There may be *exceptional* circumstances where one off payments may need to be made to young people. Approval for these payments should always be sought in advance and are at the discretion of the Team Manager.

Examples where discretionary payments may be considered are:

Housing deposits (where they cannot be secured from a bond board)

Books and equipment related to the course curriculum (where grants are not available)

Travel or removal costs to another area to take up education or employment

In exceptional circumstances food, electricity and gas can be purchased for a young person.

QUALIFYING CHILDREN

Care leavers aged 16+ qualifying under Section 24 of The Children Act 1989, as amended by The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. **(Category Six – Social Services and Well-being Act 2014)**

Discretionary payments will be available in exceptional circumstances for young people who are not relevant/former relevant but qualify under the Act. These payments will not be greater those made to Relevant Children or Former Relevant Children. Young people in this category will normally be eligible for welfare benefits on the same basis as other young people of their age.

Young people who qualify under Section 24 are:

- (a) Young people who have been in the care of this local authority but fail to reach the criteria to be eligible
- (b) Others, e.g. those who have been subject of Special Guardianship Orders.

Savings and capital from any other source will be disregarded.

NPT CHILDREN LIVING ELSEWHERE

If any of Neath Port Talbot's Eligible or Relevant young people move to a different Authority area, it is the YPA's responsibility to inform the Local Authority in which they are now living. NPT remains financially responsible for these young people.

Young People living in NPT where NPT is not the Responsible Authority

It is the responsibility of the Local Authority which last looked after the young person (the responsible authority) to notify NPT that they are living in this area. The responsible authority remains financially responsible for that young person.

FINANCIAL PAYEMENT RATES 2014/15	
Maintenance (baseline)	£60.50 per week
Utilities Allowance	£15 per week

YOUNG PERSONS STATUS	PAYMENTS PAYABLE
In Government training scheme.	Maintenance allowance
In further education or training	Maintenance allowance and utilities if applicable

REVIEW OF POLICY

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis prior to the start of each financial year.