

# Barnet Financial Policy for Care Experienced Young People

Document control	
<b>Document Title</b>	Barnet Financial Policy for Care Experienced Young People
<b>Document Description</b>	This policy provides an overview of Barnet's commitment and position on provision of financial support to care experienced young people. A summary of relevant legislation, taking into account the requirements of the Children Act 1989 and 2004, are included.
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## 1. Introduction

In Barnet, we want the same things for our care experienced young people as any good parent would want for their child. We want our care experienced young people to be resilient, and by that we mean healthy, happy and feeling valued. We want them to grow into well-adjusted individuals who will experience positive relationships, fulfil their goals and ambitions, be responsible citizens, and provide good parenting to their own children should they choose to have children.

In line with our Family Friendly Barnet approach, we want care experienced young people to be able to bounce back from life's challenges and embrace new opportunities. Our vision is for a society where care experienced young people have the same life chances and ambitions as other young people.

This desire is reinforced through our [Corporate Parenting Strategy](#) which seeks to support our ambitions for children in care and care experienced young people as outlined within the [Children and Young People's Plan 2023 – 2027](#). The Pledge reflects our corporate values of fairness, responsibility and opportunity; furthermore, it promotes our approach to delivering a model of resilience-based practice through empowering children and young people to take ownership of their pathways and identify their entitlements. Our [Local Offer](#) sets out our offer for young people who have been looked after by Barnet Council, including the information, services and support available.

This policy covers all aspects of eligibility for financial support available from London Borough of Barnet. The policy sets out the types of allowances that care experienced young people are entitled to receive based on their status and circumstances, and the current amounts payable.

The local authority will provide an adequate package of financial support for all care experienced young people that will maintain them up to independence and support their overall Pathway Plan by meeting their identified needs and helping them to achieve their potential.

All decisions on eligibility and levels of financial support will be based on a thorough assessment of all the young person's needs. An allocated Personal Advisor (PA) or Social Worker will ensure that young people are aware of and fully understand the assessment criteria and how decisions have been made regarding their financial support package.

Decisions on how financial support will be delivered to a young person will be taken by their allocated worker following assessment of their budgeting skills during the pathway planning process.

## 2. Support and Eligibility

### 2.1 Pathway Plan

Financial support can only be agreed as part of the pathway planning process. The young person's needs regarding financial support should be assessed within the

development of a Pathway Plan, and areas of support, amounts to be paid and the frequency of payments, will be set out in this plan. The Pathway Plan should be devised by the young person and their allocated worker and signed by the young person.

Social workers prepare a Pathway Plan for all Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant young people. The Pathway Plan replaces the 'All About Me' care plan when a young person turns 16. The initial Pathway Plan will be completed before a young person reaches 16 years and 3 months old. If a young person is aged over 16 when first accommodated, then the Pathway Plan will be within 3 months of the date they are accommodated.

Financial support will be reviewed every 6 months during a Pathway Plan review meeting. If a young person's circumstances change significantly, a financial review will be initiated, and young people can also request support to review their needs as required.

## 2.2 Payments

All care experienced young people, where possible, will be supported to open and maintain a bank account. Payment of all allowances and grants from Onwards and Upwards will be made directly into this bank account, unless there are concerns about the young person's ability to manage their money.

If a young person does not already have a bank account, their allocated worker will help them to open an account. In exceptional circumstances where a young person is assessed as not being able to maintain a bank account or is not able to open one, direct payments can be made via a pre-paid debit card as agreed by the Onwards and Upwards Team Manager.

Allocated workers should regularly review how the young person is managing their money and assess whether they need extra support in learning how to budget. If payments are to be stopped for any reason, this must be discussed with the Onwards and Upwards Team Manager, and the allocated worker should write to the young person to explain the reasons for this. Discussions around a young person's capacity to manage their finances and the provision of support to develop money management skills, will be discussed as part of the Pathway Planning process.

## 2.3 Eligibility

Eligibility for financial support packages is based on the young person's care leaving status as outlined below:

- **Eligible children** are those aged 16 or 17 who have been looked after by the Local Authority for at least 13 weeks since their 14<sup>th</sup> birthday and are still looked after. In addition to the services they are eligible to receive as a looked after child, they are

also entitled to an assessment to determine need for advice, assistance and support, a pathway plan and a personal advisor.

- **Relevant Children in non-residential settings (Youth Offending Institutions, Prison or Hospital)** are entitled to an assessment to determine need for advice, assistance and support, a pathway plan and a Personal Advisor.
- **Relevant children** are those aged 16 or 17 who are no longer looked after but were eligible children before he or she was last looked after. The local authority will take reasonable steps to keep in touch, will carry out an assessment to determine the need for advice, assistance and support, prepare a pathway plan and appoint a Personal Advisor.
- **Former Relevant children** are those aged 18 or above and either has been a relevant child and would be one if he were under 18 or immediately before he ceased to be looked after at age 18, was an eligible child. Until the age of 21 the local authority will take reasonable steps to keep in touch, continue to provide a Personal Advisor, if the young person's welfare requires it, provide financial assistance for living expenses where he is or will be employed or seeking employment and if the young person's welfare and educational and training needs require it, provide financial assistance to enable him or her to pursue education or training. As the young person turns 21, the pathway plan is finalised and personal advisor support ends. However, where the young person does want personal advisor support to continue, the pathway plan will be reviewed and updated to reflect current needs. Personal advisor support is provided for as long as it is requested, or until they reach age 25. A former relevant child can request personal advisor support at any point after the age of 21, up to age 25, even if they had previously ceased receiving support when they reached age 21. Support will be proportionate to needs and will taper away over time, in recognition of growing maturity and independence.
- **Qualifying children** are young people aged at least 16 but under 21 to whom a special guardianship order is in force or was in force when they reached 18 and was looked after immediately before the making of that order or after reaching the age of 16, but whilst still a child was looked after, accommodated or fostered. These young people can be assessed for support needs, including advice, befriending and assistance and financial assistance in relation to their education and training (such assistance can be provided up to 25 if in full time further or higher education).
- **Young People with no recourse to Public Funds**, aged 16 and 17 and over 18 who are looked after or were looked after by the local authority, but have not exhausted all their appeal rights, will be entitled to the same level of leaving care services as set out above.

Young people aged 18 to 21 who are excluded from Children's Services support due to being All Rights Exhausted (ARE) will be offered a Human Rights Assessment within three months of being notified that they are all rights exhausted. The assessment will look at their individual needs to establish if support should be provided in order to prevent a breach of their human rights if they cannot return to their country of origin. If the outcome of the assessment is that the young person's rights will be breached, then they will be entitled to the level of support as assessed in the Human Rights Assessment.

The financial support offered will be outlined in the young person's Pathway Plan, and discussed at each Pathway Plan review to ensure young people are aware of expectations. The young person will be further supported to engage with their agreement if they are failing to do so. Following support, the plan will be reviewed to establish if the young person has made the necessary changes to prevent subsistence and rent payments being suspended.

### 3. Our approach

#### 3.1 Benefits

Young people, who are eligible, will be expected to submit a claim for Universal Credit benefits 28 days before their 18th birthday. The allocated social worker and Leaving Care Personal Advisor will discuss and plan for this as part of the Pathway Planning process and provide support with the online application process.

If a young person is responsible for paying rent (including any eligible service charges) for the home they live in, Universal Credit may provide help towards the cost. This is called the Universal Credit Housing Costs.

Young people that are ill or disabled can claim [Employment and Support Allowance \(ESA\)](#) which provides financial support if they are unable to work or study, and personalised help so that they can work if they are able to. How much ESA a young person is paid depends on their circumstances, such as income, the type of ESA they qualify for and where they are in the assessment process.

Further information about disability related financial support available to care experienced young people can be found within [Barnet's Local Offer](#).

In cases where a young person needs to sign on for a particular benefit, they can do so at Woodhouse Road with dedicated support from Department for Work and Pensions.

### 3.2 Sanctions

When young people are sanctioned by the Department for Work and Pensions, have their payments reduced or experience difficulties in budgeting, their allocated worker will support them to contact the relevant agencies to seek resumption of their benefits, access the food bank at Woodhouse Road and apply for loans and other assistance from public bodies and voluntary agencies. They will also be supported to access budgeting support as part of the Pathway Planning process.

In exceptional circumstances, a request can be made to the Onwards and Upwards Team Manager for a discretionary payment. In such circumstances, the young person and allocated worker must demonstrate that all possible options have been exhausted, and the young person has been unable to obtain food or financial support from the options pursued. The young person will be supported to plan for such eventualities arising in future.

### 3.3 Crisis Grants

Care experienced young people can access the Barnet Residents' Support Fund or Household Support Fund. The grant helps people who:

- need extra help in an emergency
- are working but are on a low income

Care experienced young people will be supported by their allocated worker or any other trusted person to ascertain eligibility criteria and complete an application as required.

Allocated workers should assess the young person's needs and bring forward their next Pathway Plan review meeting if it is identified that finances are a recurrent or long-term issue, for which the young person is in need of additional support to prepare them for independence.

Care experienced young people are also able to apply and have priority status for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) if they experience housing related payment issues.

DHPs can provide extra money to young people or their landlord if they already receive Universal Credit Housing Costs (Housing Benefit), and if there is a shortfall between the rent the young person has to pay and the benefit they receive.

DHPs are usually paid for a few months to help through a crisis or short-term problem but can pay for longer periods in exceptional circumstances<sup>1</sup>. These

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<sup>1</sup> [DHP Information](#)

payments are helpful for care experienced young people that experience financial difficulties. Allocated workers will support young people in applying for DHPs.

### 3.4 Accommodation Costs

A young person's accommodation needs must be assessed and planned for in a timely way and should form part of the pathway planning process to ensure accommodation decisions are made for young people at the earliest opportunity. By aged 17 years and 9 months, plans should be in place for when the young person turns 18, to ensure they are adequately prepared and supported for any moves, and that any special needs are identified.

When care experienced young people reach the age of 18, they are expected to pay for their own rent and accommodation. Young people in Higher Education are expected to apply for available grants and loans and use such funding to pay for their accommodation and living.

Young people in receipt of Universal Credit are responsible for paying their rent and other living costs from this income as Universal Credit is paid in one monthly lump sum. Onwards and Upwards can make a request to the DWP to pay a young person's Landlord directly, and the remainder of the Universal Credit across two instalments each month to the young person directly, to aid them with budgeting and managing their tenancy. An allocated worker should discuss such arrangements with a young person as part of the pathway planning process.

Onwards and Upwards will contribute to the costs of accommodation:

- in exceptional circumstances, where it is agreed that the young person can remain in their residential placement, or semi-independent placement as a result of their SEN or complex needs, and this is recorded in their Pathway Plan.
- if a young person is at university or a residential Further Education establishment, and they require vacation accommodation costs<sup>2</sup>
- if a young person is over the age of 21, in full time education and they are not eligible for any benefits, grant or loan to cover accommodation costs.

Please refer to Staying Put Policy for further information on staying put with their former foster carer.

The DWP will consider payments for Housing Benefit to young people in Further Education who have their own tenancy and are on a part-time course. Care

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<sup>2</sup> This could be part of a payment to a Staying Put carer, rent for their own tenancies or financial support to help find their own accommodation (up to £155/week), or for accommodation sourced by Onwards and Upwards.



experienced young people should liaise with the DWP to find out if they are eligible for this support.

### 3.5 Rent and deposit in advance

Young people who require a deposit and rent in advance, should submit a request to the Onwards and Upwards Team Manager for financial support, so the level of support can be established. This support is only available to young people who are not intending to take up their permanent housing offer with Barnet Homes. In exceptional circumstances manager's discretion will apply to any decision on rent and deposits.

In most cases, care experienced young people will be supported to access social housing via Barnet Homes, and therefore will not be required to pay deposits and rent in advance. For those young people opting to access the private rental sector, this is supported via the Let2Barnet process, which includes rent/deposit scheme assistance.

### 3.6 Moving Costs

Onwards and Upwards will pay moving costs if they are detailed in a young person's Pathway Plan and approved by the Onwards and Upwards Team Manager.

Onwards and Upwards will pay for removal costs for one move per care leaver, with the exception of university students who may need to have a number of moves in the duration of their course. The payments of removal costs in such circumstances are at the discretion of the Team Manager and will form part of the ongoing pathway planning conversation with the allocated worker.

If a care leaver moves more than once, and this is due to exceptional circumstances such as to protect them, the cost of moving may be covered by Onwards and Upwards at the discretion of the Team Manager.

### 3.7 Council Tax

Care experienced young people are responsible for the financial liabilities of independent living, for example paying their utility bills. They will be supported by their allocated worker to access adequate support and learning opportunities around budgeting and financial management to avoid arrears.

Barnet care experienced young people are entitled to up to a maximum of 100% discount on their Council Tax up to the age of 25. This exemption may be paused for up to 2 periods where a full exemption is already being awarded because the Care Leaver is a student. The Council Tax discount is applied through a notification process and it is the care leaver's responsibility to contact the Council to request the reduction, either directly with the Revenues and Benefits Service or via the Onwards

and Upwards Team. Please refer to Care Leaver Council Tax Reduction Policy for more information.

For care experienced young people required to pay Council Tax; a Revenues Operations Officer is available to provide dedicated support to those in long term tenancies and residing in-borough on any Council Tax issues.

For care experienced young people not entitled to a full discount and who are experiencing difficulties in paying their Council Tax, in the first instance they should inform their allocated worker or the Leaving Care Duty Team who can signpost them to relevant support to prevent the issues escalating. This should include an application for a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) where necessary; further information on the DHP can be found in section 3.3.

### 3.8 Setting Up Home Allowance (SUHA)

A SUHA is available for Former Relevant Children aged 18 or over who have recourse to public funds and have moved into long term housing with their own tenancy.

A young person's SUHA is discussed as part of the pathway planning process when planning long term accommodation. The basic grant is £3000 and should be used to cover all setting up home costs.

- For each young person's SUHA, individual needs are assessed to identify which essential items and services, up to the value of £3000, are required to equip and furnish their independent accommodation. All payments are subject to authorisation from the Onwards and Upwards Team Manager and can be paid directly to approved companies or using the Onwards and Upwards payment card. In exceptional circumstances payments by instalments can be made to the young person directly, subject to the authorisation of the Team Manager and only upon completion of the ASDAN *preparation for independent living course*. All such decisions make part of an ongoing discussion within the Pathway Planning process.
- Young people who are placed into transitional accommodation for a period of time until they are allocated their long-term tenancy, may need financial support to furnish the temporary accommodation. In such cases, the allocated worker will arrange for a discretionary payment to the young person from their SUHA, to enable them to furnish their temporary accommodation with key items such as a kettle, toaster, duvet, etc. All such payments need to be authorised by the Onwards and Upwards Team Manager.
- Other setting up home related costs such as re-decoration, TV licence, telephone line, broadband, cutting spare keys, etc. should be budgeted to be paid out of the SUHA.
- Where there are exceptional accommodation-related needs not met by the above points, or charitable funding, an application can be made for further

financial assistance from Onwards and Upwards for decision and approval from the Assistant Head of Service.

As responsible Corporate Parents, the London Borough of Barnet aims to ensure that all care experienced young people are resilient and able to bounce back from life's challenges. A key way this is achieved is by supporting young people to budget and plan for their SUHA, to ensure that it best meets the need for which it is intended.

A Care Leaver's budgeting needs are identified as part of the pathway planning process, and support will be provided by the allocated worker. The support will vary according to the young person and their needs but could include attending a budgeting workshop at WHR or signposting them to a Careers Advisor for advice. Developing a young person's financial literacy, and how to be sensible with their grant, is of equal importance to ensure they get the most out of this and their finances in general.

Young people who are detained will still be eligible to receive their SUHA upon release, on condition of them getting their own tenancy. For young people planning to access long-term accommodation after the age of 21, the SUHA allowance grant will be available to them for a maximum of 12 months from their 21st birthday (or 12 months after they have left University over the age of 21).

### 3.9 Young People and Education, Employment and Training

Onwards and Upwards will review financial circumstances and, where applicable, explore options for seeking additional financial support, including applying for grants and other financial support for young people completing progressive levels of education. Onwards and Upwards will not generally provide financial support to young people who complete more than one course at the same level.

If a young person is required to complete more than one qualification to achieve their final qualification, then this will be considered to be a progressive course. This should be included in the Pathway Plan.

Onwards and Upwards will provide Personal Advisor support to Former Relevant care experienced young people with recourse to access student finance to complete a full-time programme of Higher Education study (Bachelor's, Master's or Doctorate degree) as recorded in the young person's Pathway Plan. Support will be provided to the young person until the end of the institution's academic year, during which the young person's 25th birthday falls, for study of a progressive, full-time programme.

The young person's allocated worker will ensure this is clearly explained throughout the pathway planning process, and the young people will be signposted to support post-25 if still completing a course at that point.

### 3.10 Further Education Bursaries (College)

Care experienced young people attending college are expected to access the college bursary which they may be entitled to and from which many essential study expenses can be purchased such as travel, course materials and food. Young people must provide evidence of their course of study, including term dates, and evidence of attendance.

Onwards and Upwards will liaise with the college to ensure that care experienced young people are provided with the financial support that they are entitled to and to confirm course details. In order for this to take place; young people will need to give consent for Onwards and Upwards to contact their college. Onwards and Upwards will not provide financial support towards Further Education if course details have not been confirmed by the college.

All care experienced young people are entitled and will be supported to apply for the [16 – 19 Bursary Fund](#), which is available from their education institution. This is a fund provided by the Government to support students who need financial help to stay in education.

There are 2 types of 16 - 19 bursaries:

- a vulnerable bursary of up to £1,200 a year for young people in one of the defined vulnerable groups.
- discretionary bursaries that institutions award to meet individual needs. For example, for transport, meals, books and equipment.

The education institution is responsible for managing both types of bursary.

Care experienced young people can get up to £1,200 if studying full time for a minimum of 30 weeks. If their course is only for a few hours a week, or less than 30 weeks, they will usually receive less.

Young people aged 19 or over will be supported to apply for Discretionary Learner Support available from their education institution.

As part of the pathway planning process, an assessment will be undertaken to ensure that a young person has enough financial support to complete their course. Young people that require equipment or materials at a cost or frequency not met by their bursary will be supported by their allocated worker to explore all available sources of financial support to meet the young person's needs, for example, charities or the education panel which has a small discretionary fund held by the Virtual School which is often used to meet exceptional need. In exceptional circumstances, a request can be made to the Onwards and Upwards Team Manager for financial support towards the cost of essential course equipment.

For some care experienced young people some costs may be met as part of their Personal Education Plan (PEP).

### 3.11 Allowances for Higher Education

Onwards and Upwards will pay a young person's rent during university published Easter, Christmas and Summer holiday periods. This is subject to enrolment and ongoing evidence of attendance confirmation.

Onwards and Upwards will pay subsistence at a rate equivalent to universal credit personal allowance, throughout the Easter, Christmas and Summer holiday periods. This is subject to enrolment and ongoing evidence of attendance confirmation.

This will be done for the duration of the Higher Education course until the end of the academic year during which the young person turns 25, as outlined in the Pathway Plan.

When attending university, care experienced young people are expected to apply for all available financial support and bursaries that they are entitled to. This expectation will be explained by the allocated worker as part of the pathway planning process and before enrolment, to ensure young people are fully aware and are supported to do this.

Care experienced young people can access various grants and loans to assist them with Higher Education costs:

- Higher Education Bursary: Under the Education Act 1989 (Higher Education Bursary) (England) Regulations 2009, all Former Relevant Children attending university will be provided with a one-off Higher Education Bursary to the value of £2000 from the Local Authority. This is ringfenced to undergraduate programmes of study only and subject to ongoing evidence of attendance. This is required for each instalment payment.
- Maintenance Loan (Repayable): An application for a Maintenance Loan, can be made to help meet costs while studying. The maximum Loan amount a student can apply for can be confirmed via Student Finance England. A student does not have to apply for the loan initially, they can wait until they have started the course and see how they manage financially.
- Tuition Fee Loan: Students are required to apply for a Tuition Fee Loan to cover the cost of course fees. A new application must be submitted for each year of the course. The amount a student will receive for their Tuition Fee Loan will cover their fees and will be paid directly to the university.
- Bursary: Students are also able to apply for a bursary (a one-off payment) from their university - this varies between universities; however, many universities provide additional bursaries to care experienced young people. Details about whether a university offers a bursary can be obtained from them during enrolment. More information about bursary payments can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/extra-money-pay-university>.

- University and college hardship funds: Some universities provide money to students who are facing financial difficulties, either as a grant or a loan, in a lump sum or instalments. Students need to apply via the Student Services Department, or equivalent team, when they have started their course.
- Disability Student Allowances: Disabled students can claim additional allowances. These are to pay for additional needs, such as special equipment or a helper. An assessment must be undertaken before any money is awarded; however, the allowances are grants, not loans.

Some universities have a support worker to provide advice and guidance to care experienced young people, to help with the complexities of student finance.

The Student Finance website can be accessed through <https://www.gov.uk/browse/education/student-finance> and has useful information about Higher Education, including how to apply for funding.

In order for the Higher Education Bursary and Vacation payments to be authorised, Care experienced young people will need to give consent for Onwards and Upwards to contact their university to verify:

- Course name
- Enrolment status
- Term dates
- Attendance (minimum of 90% required)

If consent is not provided or the above cannot be verified, financial support will not be provided from Onwards and Upwards.

Young people must also provide evidence of:

- Loans and grants received
- Official list of equipment or books required for the course
- Proof of tenancy or Licence agreement including weekly or monthly rent costs

All payments from Onwards and Upwards must be authorised by the Team Manager.

### 3.12 Young people needing continuing care

If a young person has been assessed as needing support from the disability service, a transition plan will be developed, which will identify the level of support available. please refer to the [Preparing for Adulthood Transition Planning and Support protocol](#). The [Barnet Local Offer](#) helps children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) and their families find information and support, from across the Barnet local area, including [financial support](#), and also provides links to the relevant resources.

### 3.13 Travel

Care experienced young people are expected to fund travel to college and university through their bursary. In exceptional circumstances, Onwards and Upwards may offer short term support during term time. Calculations are based on the cost of travel from the young person's home to their place of study. All travel contributions must be approved by the Onwards and Upwards Team Manager.

Young people aged under 18 and based in London, can apply for a Zip Oyster photocard which enables them to travel at half adult-rate on all TfL services and most National Rail services in London. If they live in London they may be eligible to travel for free on buses and trams.

Students aged over 18 and based in London, attending a course at a school, college or university in London can apply for an 18+ Student Oyster Card to get 30% off the price of adult-rate travelcards and Bus and Tram Pass season tickets.

All students can also apply for rail cards and other travel related discounts and should be supported by their allocated worker to explore what discounts they may be eligible for, especially when studying outside of London.

### 3.14 Graduation Allowance

For students that have successfully completed their course and will therefore graduate, a one off allowance of up to £850 will be paid to cover the graduation costs and transition costs from finishing course to employment.

### 3.15 Apprenticeships

Young people who commence employment or training and subsequently are no longer in receipt of benefits, will receive an allowance equivalent to JSA rates from Onwards and Upwards until they receive their first salary payment.

Subject to earnings, a care leaver might still be entitled to some benefits on full time employment or apprenticeship, e.g., personal allowance or the housing element of the universal credit.

Onwards and Upwards will support young people on apprenticeships or salaries paying less than the Universal Credit Income Support rate, by providing a top up payment, to ensure they receive the same amount of income as if they were in education.

Top up payments are conditional on the young person providing consent for their allocated worker to verify details of the apprenticeship status with the provider, and

any other relevant details as requested. All top up payments must be authorised by the Onwards and Upwards Team Manager.

### 3.16 Young people with Discretionary Leave to Remain

Young people who have applied for asylum and been granted Discretionary Leave to Remain are not able to apply for 'home' fees and Student Support for a Higher Education course in England. This is because eligibility is restricted to those with Humanitarian Protection and their family members. However, there are some organisations who may be able to help. Please see [Student Action for Refuges](#) for a list of scholarships for asylum seekers as well as the Educational Grant Advisory Service (EGAS), run by [Family Action](#), that administrates educational grants to help to unlock post-16 educational opportunities for under-represented and disadvantaged groups, including asylum seekers.

The Government's regulations about who pays 'home' fees and who pays 'overseas' fees have changed. Young people that start an undergraduate course in England on, or after, 1 August 2019, will need to have been resident in the UK for the three years leading up to the start of the course. For the rest of the UK, there is no change.

## 4. Other allowances

### 4.1 Subsistence

When a young person turns 18, their allocated worker will support them to apply to claim benefits, as outlined in section 3.1.

Former Relevant Children in non-residential settings (Youth Offending Institutions, Prison or Hospital) are paid a reduced subsistence allowance at a standard rate of £10 per week, up to the age of 21. Variation to the standard rate is subject to an assessment of need. For young people aged 21+ this will be subject to their ongoing engagement with the leaving care service, for example being available for visits and contributing to their pathway plan review. They will also be required to demonstrate that they're engaging in EET within the custody estate wherever possible.

### 4.2 Dental Costs

Young people may be granted full exemption from charges or partial exemption from dental charges, there are several entitlement criteria that be applicable, including educational status, in receipt of universal credit or NHS Low Income Scheme (LIS). For clarity on dental costs, and exemption, Care experienced young people can visit the following website:

<http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcosts/Pages/Dentalcosts.aspx>

### 4.3 Social and Leisure Activities

Care experienced young people are entitled to a free Barnet leisure pass from the



age of 16, which enables them to access swimming activities free of charge, as well as discounts on a wide range of other activities at any of the five leisure centres in Barnet.

Onwards and Upwards will support applications for additional support, including gym passes, through charities such as [Live Unlimited](#).

#### 4.4 Birthday Gifts

Young people should indicate their voucher or cash preference to their Personal Advisor who will arrange for the allowance to be given. Young people who live in independent living will be paid their birthday allowance, if there is evidence of ongoing contact between the young person and Onwards and Upwards.

For young people in Young Offenders Institutions the birthday allowance is paid by postal order.

The allowance paid to care experienced young people is as follows:

- 18th birthday - £100
- 19th birthday - £30
- 20th birthday - £30
- 21st birthday - £50

#### 4.5 Savings

Any savings that have been saved for the young person whilst they have been in care will be paid to them after their 18th birthday.

If there are concerns about a young person's capacity to manage their money, prior to the young person turning 18, work will be done with the young person to explore how they may best use their savings and consider options about how to spend them. All concerns will be discussed with the young person as part of the pathway planning process.

If it is deemed that a young person does not have capacity to manage their finances, the allocated worker should inform the Onwards and Upwards Team Manager regarding at the earliest possible opportunity. Concerns regarding a young person's capacity will be referred to the Disability Service who will organise for a Mental Capacity Act assessment to be undertaken, to establish a young person's ability to manage their own finances. Depending on the outcome of the assessment, a best interest meeting may follow to determine who is best placed to manage the young person's finances. Capacity assessments can be completed from the age of 16.

Where a young person has received other monies, either from the Criminal Injury Compensation Board or by way of inheritance, the allocated worker will help them

to access support to budget the money and use it sensibly. All such payments should be paid into the young person's bank account.

#### 4.6 Young Parents

Care experienced young people who are parents are expected to maximise their income. They can claim Child Benefit and, depending on their circumstances, they may claim other benefits:

- Universal credit: Payment to help with living costs, sum depends on circumstances and income. Extra amounts apply for those responsible for a child (e.g., child tax credit), and the work allowance (e.g., amount that can be earned before universal credit is reduced) is greater. Working Tax Credit still applies during the first 39 weeks of maternity leave or during ordinary paternity leave. Additional benefits can be claimed to pay towards approved childcare. Universal credit includes housing benefit were applicable; the shared accommodation rate for private rented accommodation does not apply to care experienced young people until they reach their 22nd birthday.
- Sure Start Maternity Grant: Young parents may also claim a Sure Start Maternity Grant of £500 on the birth of their first baby (or subsequent multiple births e.g. twins) if they are in receipt of benefits, to help pay for essential equipment. A claim should be made within 11 weeks of the due birth date or within 6 months after the baby's birth. Young parents do not have to pay the grant back and it will not affect other benefits or tax credits.
- Care to Learn Grant: Young parents who wish to return to or remain in school or college can apply for a Care to Learn Grant of up to £160 per child per week if they live outside London (only applies in England), and £175 per child per week if they live in London. This is a grant for help with childcare costs for parents who are:
  - Aged under 20 at the start of their course
  - The main carer for their child
  - Studying a publicly funded course (The school, college or learning provider will advise if the course is eligible)
  - And where the childcare provider qualifies.
- Childcare contributions: For parents that have a dependent child, it is sometimes possible to apply for financial support for childcare costs when attending Higher Education. Information should be sought from the university directly to find out if this applies.
- Childcare Grant: Young parents can also claim a Childcare Grant for help with childcare costs. The grant is paid weekly to students in university full-time who have, or are eligible for, a student finance package and have a childcare provider who is registered with Ofsted. The amount of grant paid is dependent on household income, cost of childcare and number of dependent children. It is on top of student finance and does not have to be paid back.

- Parents Learning Allowance: Full-time undergraduate or Initial Teacher Training students with children may be eligible for help with their learning costs. The Parents Learning Allowance does not have to be paid back, is on top of other student finance, does not require parents to be paying for childcare and won't affect benefits or tax credit. Depending on household income, in the 2019 to 2020 academic year the sum was between £50 and £1,716 a year.
- Healthy Start Scheme: The scheme can help buy basic foods like milk or fruit. The young person needs to be pregnant or have a child under 4.

More information on benefits can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/families>

Young people could also get free hours childcare when the child is aged 2 to 4:

- Free early education and childcare for 2-year-old if on benefits
- All parents of 3 to 4-year-olds in England can get 570 free hours per year. It's usually taken as 15 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year, but parents can choose to take fewer hours over more weeks, for example.
- Parents that are working may be able to get up to 30 hours free childcare (1,140 hours per year) for child that is 3 to 4 years old.

Please see <https://www.gov.uk/get-childcare> for more information.

Onwards and Upwards will help young parents who wish to take up education, training or employment opportunities to identify possible funds to cover childcare costs, such as applying for the Vulnerable Children's Fund.

#### 4.7 ID, Citizenship and Naturalisation

Onwards and Upwards will purchase 1 birth certificate and 1 passport for all children in care and care experienced young people, up until the age of 21, or 25 if still supported by the service. If these documents, are lost after being purchased by Onwards and Upwards, then the young person is responsible for the cost of replacing them.

Onwards and Upwards will help care experienced young people to access legal support from services that offer free support for Indefinite Leave to Remain or Settled Status applications. If legal aid has been refused based on the lack of merit for the claim, financial support will not be provided unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Onwards and Upwards will not pay for young people who have Indefinite Leave to Remain to apply for citizenship or naturalisation.

For UASC young people who are not eligible to apply for a passport but require Home Office travel documents, Onwards and Upwards will pay the cost of this document one time per Care Leaver, equivalent to the passport offer.

Onwards and Upwards will not pay the costs of other travel visas.

## 5. Knowing your rights and entitlements

### 5.1 Advocacy Support

If a Care Leaver feels that they cannot complain themselves, or ask an adult or friend, they can ask for an advocate to support them.

Barnet care experienced young people can contact Action for Children for an advocate, who can help with understanding rights and entitlements, submitting a complaint, and understanding the response. An advocate will also try to help with any problems that present along the way.

If you would like an advocate, you can call Action for Children on 020 7254 9408 or look on their website at [www.actionforchildren.org.uk](http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk)

Personal Advisors and Social Workers can also provide further information about advocacy support.

### 5.2 How to make a complaint

As part of Barnet's 'Family Friendly' approach, we are keen to hear from care experienced young people if they feel we have made a mistake. Young people will not be treated differently if they make a complaint; it is important that young people inform us if we may have done something wrong.

If a care experienced young person wishes to complain, they can:

- Do so themselves by contacting the Family Services Complaints Officer
- Tell their Personal Advisor or Social Worker
- Tell their Foster Carer or Key Worker
- Talk to an adult or friend they trust

The Complaints Officer can be contacted by:

- Email: [FSCComplaints@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:FSCComplaints@barnet.gov.uk)
- Paper form – available from Onwards and Upwards Team
- Telephone – 020 8359 7008
- In writing – Family Services Complaints Officer, Barnet Family Services, 2 Bristol Avenue, Colindale NW9 4EW.

### 5.3 Contacting the local MP

Care experienced young people can also ask their Member of Parliament (MP) for help with issues that they feel need more support.

Local MPs can be found at <https://members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP> and local councillors can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-councillors>.

An advocate can also support a young person to obtain the details of their MP.