1. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

   That the Corporate Parenting Panel notes the content of the Leaving Care Policy.

2. **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

2.1 The Leaving Care Policy provides the criteria and application for support services to young people leaving care so that they can enter adulthood as socially integrated and economically participative citizens. This policy is the main means of progressing the objectives of the Achieving Economic Well-
Being outcome of the Looked After Children’s Strategy and Forward Plan 2012 and should be read in conjunction with each other.

2.2. This policy applies to care leavers, including all indigenous care leavers (normally UK or EU born or with UK citizenship) and unaccompanied young asylum seekers with refugee status and discretionary leave to remain.

This policy document is supported by three documents currently In use as guides to social workers, personal advisers, and to young people. These documents are attached as appendices and should be read in conjunction with the Leaving Care Policy which provides them with their context.

3. London Borough of Croydon Leaving Care Policy

1. Introduction

This policy guidance describes how services are delivered to our young people leaving care so that they can enter adulthood as socially integrated and economically participative citizens.

This policy applies to care leavers, including all indigenous care leavers (normally UK or EU born or with UK citizenship) and unaccompanied young asylum seekers with refugee status and discretionary leave to remain.

This policy document is supported by the appendices and these should be read in conjunction:

Appendix 1: FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR CARE LEAVERS
Appendix 2: INFORMATION SHEET: FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO CARE LEAVERS
Appendix 3: UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKER CHILDREN (UASC)

2. Our vision

As Corporate Parent, Croydon Council wants to achieve the same best outcomes for our looked after children as any parent would wish for their children. We want our looked after children to have similar opportunities and chances in life to that of children growing up in their own families. That’s why we will provide looked after children with the support and help they need to reach their potential during childhood and into adult life. We provide looked after children with caring foster families or support them in other placements best suited to their needs, and we strive to ensure they receive a good education and good health care. When they leave their care placements we support them with appropriate resources and help to achieve their independence and fulfill their potential as adult members of society. As Corporate Parent, the London Borough of Croydon has the same aspirations for looked after children as that of any good parent for their child; we want our
children and young people to be safe, healthy, happy, integrated and contributing members of their local communities and of our society.

Like any good parent we will assist our young people through higher education or into employment or training opportunities, and ensure they have somewhere suitable to live once they leave their care placements. To do this we provide every young person aged between 16 and 21 who qualify for leaving care services with a personal adviser who will provide support and guidance, and work, with other agencies to help the young person gain access to wider support services. These may include services from adult social care services and health services for care leavers who have learning difficulties or mental health problems. For a young person below the age of 18 years their personal adviser will be their social worker. Public financial resources are limited but we will work within those limitations to provide our care leavers with the utmost support and guidance as we can and work together in partnership with other agencies to deliver help where and when it is most needed.

3. Our Objectives

- To motivate and assist each young person to reach their potential for education, training and employment so that they can achieve adult independence
- To promote their good health by encouraging a healthy sexual, emotional and physical lifestyle
- To facilitate and support them in suitable accommodation
- To help them maintain positive family and friendship relationships
- To assist them to be financially independent, and able to budget, and to save and manage their money.
- To provide them with a worker who will undertake the role of personal adviser.

4. Our Duties and Responsibilities to Relevant, Former Relevant and Eligible Young People

- To stay in touch with the young person
- To keep their Pathway Plan under regular review, with clear actions to access employment, education and training opportunities appropriate to the young persons needs (including providing the Higher Education Bursary where applicable)
- To include actions within the Pathway Plan to assist the best health care and interpersonal outcomes for the young person
• To ensure their personal adviser continues to co-ordinate the provision of services

• To pay a Higher Education Bursary for those former relevant young people in higher education.

• To provide financial assistance to enable the young person to meet expenses connected with education or training when this is identified in the Pathway Plan.

5. The Legal Context

a) Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

This Act amended and clarified some sections of the Children Act 1989 dealing with the support needs of care leavers and the quality of planning for their transition from childhood and into adult independence. Corporate Parents are required to offer the same care and support to young people leaving care as that of any reasonable parent helping their child to make the transition to adult independence. Good Corporate Parents will provide these young people with help and support to access education, employment and training opportunities and to find accommodation suited to their needs.

b) Children and Young Persons Act 2008 and Care Leavers’ (England) Regulations 2010

The 2010 Regulations clarified the requirement of the 2008 Act for looked after children moving from accommodation regulated by the Care Standards Act 2000 (or semi-independent accommodation) into other accommodation to have a statutory review of their care plan chaired by their Independent Reviewing Officer. It also introduced the requirement for local authorities to pay a Higher Education Bursary for certain former relevant young people and the right of care leavers under 25 years of age wanting to access education or training to resume support from a personal adviser.

6. Definitions

a) Eligible Young Persons

These are young persons aged 16 or 17 years who have been looked after for a period or periods totaling at least 13 weeks starting from their 14th birthday and are still looked after children, except for young persons with a disability who have had a series of short term pre-planned respite care placements lasting up to 4 weeks. The Council has a duty to support these young people up to the age of 18, wherever they are living, and beyond into independence, if they become former relevant young people. (See 6b and 6c). The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 (Volume 2) requires that a thorough assessment of the young person’s needs is undertaken to
inform the actions for achievement in the Pathway Plan (see 7), that the Pathway Plan is reviewed, and that a worker is appointed as personal adviser to the young person.

b) Relevant Young Persons

These are young persons aged 16 or 17 who have already left care but were previously looked after for a total of at least 13 weeks from the age of 14, and at some time during their 16th or 17th year. This does not apply to a young person who has returned to their home from care and this has been successfully maintained for a period of 6 months or more. A young person is also relevant if, having been looked after for three months or more, he or she is then detained after their 16th birthday either in a hospital, remand centre, young offenders’ institution or in a secure training centre. There is a duty to support relevant young people up to the age of 18 years, wherever they are living.

The Care Leavers Regulations 2010 require the Council to remain in contact with relevant young people, and to undertake the responsibilities outlined in 6a above.

c) Former Relevant Young Persons

These are young people aged 18 to 21 years (or up to 25 years if attending an agreed course in further or higher education specified in their Pathway Plan) who have been eligible and/or relevant and were placed in care subject to a Care Order, or remanded into care, or accommodated by voluntary agreement. The Care Leavers Regulations 2010 make the same requirements of the Council as in 6a and 6b above. These requirements continue until the young person becomes 21 or up to 25 in some cases. In setting out goals and actions for achievement, the Pathway Plan should also set out timescales for completion so that it is clear when the Plan will expire so leaving care services can lawfully cease.

For former relevant young persons aged between 21 and under 25 years of age and wishing to take up an agreed programme of education, the Care Leavers Regulations 2010 make the same requirements of the Council as in 6a and 6b above. This is to provide appropriate assistance by, for example, contributing to expenses incurred by the young person in living near the place where s/he is receiving education or training; or by making a grant towards meeting the costs and expenses of their course, based on the assessment of their needs and circumstances and included in the Pathway Plan.

d) Young People Qualifying For Advice and Assistance

i. Category A Special Guardianship

These young people are those young persons aged between 16 and 21 who are not eligible, relevant or former relevant young persons, but qualify for advice and assistance because they are or were subject to a Special
Guardianship Order prior to their 18th birthday, or who had been looked after immediately prior to their becoming subject to a Special Guardianship Order or who were looked after children when over the age of 16 years but for less than a total of 13 weeks after their 14th birthday. These qualifying young persons are known as “category A”. Advice and assistance is provided to qualifying young persons by their relevant local authority. This is the last local authority in which the young person was a looked after child.

ii. Category B Looked After Children

For young persons aged under 21 years of age who were looked after for a period in total of less than 13 weeks after their 16th birthday (starting from their 14th birthday) the local authority is required by Section 24(5) of the Children Act 1989 to provide appropriate advice and assistance. In this case, the relevant local authority is the local authority approached by the young person. These qualifying young persons are known as “category B”. However, if a young person aged below 18 years and previously looked after for a period in total of less than 13 weeks after their 16th birthday (starting from their 14th birthday) has returned home she or he is not to be regarded as qualifying for the purpose of Section 24 Children Act 1989, but support should be assessed and provided under Section 17 Children Act 1989 (child in need).

7. The Pathway Plan

The appointment of a personal adviser (who will be the young person’s social worker if aged below 18 years) and formal prospective planning for leaving care starts in the looked after children’s teams within 3 months of a young person’s 16th birthday. The needs assessment that is the basis for the Pathway Plan should also have been concluded within three months of the young person’s 16th birthday. Three months before their 16th birthday, the looked after child’s social worker will write to the young person (and where appropriate those who hold parental responsibility), setting out the arrangements for a needs assessment. As well as starting to plan for the future, including higher education and career ambitions, this will be an opportunity to establish whether the young person has special needs that ought to be considered as they enter adulthood and to ensure that other services such as Adult Social Care and Housing can begin their planning. The assessment of needs must address the young person’s:

- Health and development
- Education, training and employment including achievements to date, and special needs and career ambitions
- Emotional and behavioural development and any special needs in this area
- Identity including ethnicity, religious persuasion, sexual orientation as well as any issues arising from being a child in care
- Family and social relationships
- Practical and other skills necessary for independent living
- Financial arrangements – including bank account, NI number, savings.
- Accommodation – current arrangements and likely future needs
• Contingency planning if goals are not achieved.

The Pathway Plan should state ambitious but achievable goals for achieving adult independence and the actions required of the Corporate Parent, the young person, other agencies, and other significant people including family. The Pathway Plan replaces the Care Plan for young people remaining looked after. The Pathway Plan and the needs assessment is reviewed by a statutory review chaired by the young person’s IRO within 3 months of their 16th birthday and thereafter every 6 months or sooner if required. The partnership working between social worker, family members, carers, designated teacher, designated LAC nurse, and other relevant professionals is vital if actions and outcomes are to be achieved. If the young person remains placed in non-regulated accommodation, the Pathway Plan should be reviewed within 28 days of that placement, then after 3 months, and thereafter every 6 months.

If a young person has been assessed to have additional/complex needs, for example, mental health needs requiring additional support, the Independent Reviewing Officer will ensure at the review closest to the young person’s 17th birthday that a detailed and robust Transition Plan is in place to ensure Adult Care Services continue after the young person’s 18th birthday. In the same way, the Transition Plan will also identify post-18 housing needs and Housing shall be notified so that planning can begin. This is particularly important for young people who are likely to have specialist or additional support needs which can be met through Supported People funding arrangements.

8. Accommodation Arrangements

a) Staying Put

The majority of looked after young people aged below 18 years will be cared for in foster care placements with carers who can meet their needs for a loving and stable family life, and help in preparing them to make the transition to adult independence and to their own accommodation after their 18th birthday as agreed within the Pathway Plan. Some young people may choose to remain with their foster carers after 18 as a supported lodgings arrangement. These young people are no longer looked after children and fostering arrangements and conditions no longer apply. This option for the young person, known as Staying Put in the guidance, can offer a good transition to independence. This change in the placement status from that of fostering (governed by the statutory requirements of the National Minimum Fostering Standards 2011) to that of supported lodgings must be well planned in advance so that there is no confusion about the status of the placement or the conditions applying to the placement.

It is essential that the foster carer and their supervising social worker are fully involved in the planning stages of these arrangements as this will affect the carer’s fostering status, tax liabilities, income, and benefits entitlements. These arrangements are eligible for qualifying tax relief on the income, however, the Council cannot provide detailed advice on these issues, and carers are referred to HM Revenue and Customs Help Sheet 236.
The Council does not fund supported lodgings arrangements, as these are an arrangement between the young person who is now a legal adult and their former foster carer, and these are usually funded by the young person from Housing Benefit. However, as an exception to this, Croydon will continue fostering placement funding to a supported lodging arrangement if the young person has become 18 years of age in the academic year in which they are completing A level examinations. The Corporate Parent has made this exception so as to support young people aiming to complete their A level examinations and funding will continue until the September of the final A level year and, if applicable, to the young person’s start at university in the same year.

*Staying Put* arrangements for young people who receive services from adult care will normally require the foster carer to register as an adult carer. Dual registration is possible though children’s and adult services will need to carefully consider the implications. In some cases direct payments may be used to enable the young person to live in the house of the former carer. Specialist advice will be sought from Adult Services.

*b) Semi-Independent Accommodation*

For young people over 16 years of age who do not wish to remain within their foster care placements or within their children’s home and are making the transition towards independence, semi–independent accommodation can be a good option. Semi-independent accommodation provides a range of support suited to the young person’s transitional needs. Before a young person aged below 18 years moves from a care placement regulated by law to a placement of this kind which is unregulated by law a statutory review is held, chaired by the young person’s IRO, to ensure the change of placement meets the young person’s needs and is consistent with the goals of their Pathway Plan.

c)  *Tenancy*

For care leavers becoming 18 and not opting to remain with their former foster carers as a supported lodging arrangement funded from Housing Benefit, Croydon will help to arrange accommodation. This may be Council housing if it is available or housing in the private sector, through the Croydon Landlord Bonded Scheme. Six months prior to the young person’s 18th birthday, their social worker will make a referral to the Housing Panel. Representatives from Housing, providers and Supporting People attend this panel and decisions are made on the best accommodation option available to the care leaver on reaching eighteen.

Some young people have special needs which mean that they need more assistance than others to maintain a tenancy. These are referred to the Support Need and Placement (SNAP) Team in Housing as soon as possible after their 16th birthday to ensure that a suitable supported tenancy can be identified by their 18th birthday or by the time they are ready to move from foster care or other accommodation.
**d) Student Vacation Accommodation**

Arrangements for university accommodation may mean that care leavers need to find alternative accommodation during vacation periods if they don’t have family members or friends who can accommodate them, or other arrangements of their choice in place. In these cases, Croydon will help by providing accommodation either in Croydon or in the area of the university. Arrangements will need to be made according to individual circumstances.

**9. Allowances and Financial Assistance**

**a) Setting up Home Allowance**

The Council will provide £1000 for each young person leaving care to support them in setting up their own home. There is considerable flexibility in using the allowance – it can be used at any time after the age of 16 whilst the young person is leading towards independence. Payments can be in installments. The personal adviser will ensure the allowance is spent for the purpose of setting up home and will help the young person with their budgeting and in getting the best value from the allowance.

The allowance will normally be payable when the young person has secured a tenancy but certain items could be purchased in advance, where planned, and the cost deducted from the final figure. It is required by the Corporate Parent that social workers and carers will ensure that young people will leave foster care with some savings and with some personal possessions such as bedding, towels, suitcase and other essential items. While looked after, young people receive pocket money and carers and children’s homes will encourage young people to save so that they leave care with some money to start them on their adult life.

**b) Financial Support**

All allowances will be based on an assessment of need and be set out in the young person’s Pathway Plan (see the appendix to this document, financial payments to care leavers). The Plan will highlight any conditions for support, how payments will be made, the frequency and when these will be reviewed.

If young people are not in employment and are relevant care leavers under 18, the Council will pay maintenance at the level of Job Seekers Allowance until benefits can be claimed at age 18. This will be conditional on the basis that paid employment is the goal and that young people are actively seeking employment, relevant education or training which is likely to lead to employment. Personal advisers will provide advice and support to improve employability and work with local employers to ensure there are job opportunities.

Where young people are unemployed and approaching 18, they will be
referred to the Benefits Advice Service in the 18+ team so that they can claim benefits while seeking work.

c) Further and Higher Education Bursaries and Financial Support

- **Further Education**

  Looked after young people aged 16 and 17 will have their care and support needs met through their placement while they are in education, training or employment. Former relevant young people aged 18 or 19 who start a course of education prior to their 19th birthday are able to claim benefits until age 20 and will be supported to claim the appropriate benefits. This eligibility ceases at age 20 for those in full time education. Discretionary support is sometime available through education providers. From September 2011, young people will be supported to claim the government bursary for 16-19 year olds who are in care or leaving care. This is a bursary of £1200 managed by Further Education Colleges and schools and can be up to £30 a week for 40 weeks.

- **Higher Education**

  Young people considering going to university will be given advice during Year 12 on what support they can expect from the Council, and this support includes costs of travel and overnight accommodation for visiting universities in advance of making choices regarding applications. All care leavers going to university will be expected, like the majority of their peers, to apply for maximum student loans to cover the costs of fees and day to day living expenses. In addition, many universities provide additional support for care leavers. Their personal adviser will help the young person access information about which universities provide additional support.

  The Council will pay a £2000 bursary for all care leavers who start a higher education course before they are aged 21. The definition of higher education course is one of at least 2 academic years’ duration and designated under section 22(1) of the Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998. The bursary may be paid as a lump sum or in installments depending on which option would best meet the needs of the young person. Whether the payment is in a lump sum or in installments, it should be paid within 4 weeks of the start of the course.

  Young people leaving care have potential access to a wide range of bursaries, grants and loans and should be encouraged to take advantage of these. In most cases young people should be encouraged to work during holiday periods both to support themselves but also to enhance subsequent employability.

- **Care Leavers resuming education after the age of 21**

  The Turnaround Centre is now the established hub for services for care leavers over the age of 18 and all care leavers will be informed that should
they wish to resume a programme of education, they should contact the duty social worker / personal adviser at the Turnaround Centre. Wherever possible there should be continuity of personal adviser so that the PA who previously knew the young person before the age of 21 is allocated to assess the request of the young person to re-enter education, formulate a new Pathway Plan and provide information about any financial support. In every case where a care leaver requests this support, there will be an assessment of the appropriateness of the education or training course and how it will help the young person to achieve their ambitions. This assessment could well draw on the information about the young person’s skills and capabilities which will have been set out in pathway plans up to age 21. The extent of practical and financial assistance provided will depend on the authority’s assessment of the young person’s needs and will reflect the type of course, whether it is full or part time, and the young person’s existing income.

The re-instated Pathway Plan must have a specific focus on the support that the individual care leaver will need to be able to meet the education or training goals agreed with their responsible authority. It is possible that young people may seek support to complete a series of education/training opportunities and an assessment will be made on the need for continuing assistance in this regard. The duties of the local authority continue for as long as the young person continues to pursue the agreed programme of education.

10. Transfer of Care Leavers aged 18 years

a) Transfer to the 18 Plus Team

Looked after children are the responsibility of the looked after children teams until they are 18 and their transfer to the 18 Plus Team takes place on their 18th birthday unless they are undertaking A levels (to ensure no disruption at this crucial time). The young person will be advised of the support available from the 18 Plus Team in advance of their transfer. For this reason the young person’s statutory reviews from 16 years of age will be addressing future transitional plans as well as the immediate future. On reaching their 17th birthday, the social worker will write to the young person and those looking after him or her, setting out the process for transfer to the 18-Plus Team. Essential documents for the young person will be identified at the first statutory review following their 16th birthday to ensure they are available, including:

- Birth certificate (with copy on file) or Home Office/age assessment documentation in case of UASC
- Passport (if eligible)
- National Insurance Number (if eligible).
- Housing registration number
- Needs Assessment
- Pathway Plan (inclusive of their Personal Education Plan and Health Plan).
b) Transfer to Adult Social Care Services

Those young people who may be eligible for Community Care Adult Services will be referred by their social worker to the Transition Panel at the age of 16 to ensure transitional services for young persons with disabilities and/or mental health needs are provided in collaboration with Adult Services. Prior to referral to the Transitions Panel, the Transitions Monitoring Group for looked after children with a disability or with complex needs will have been monitoring the assessment and planning needs of young people aged 14 years and over, including making decisions about eligibility for adult services. The young person’s Pathway Plan will specify what support is required from adult services, and who has responsibility for ensuring partnership working and coordinated delivery.

11. Help with Employment, Education and Training

All young people leaving care will have an assessment of their education, training and employment needs and a post-16 Personal Education Plan (PEP) included within their Pathway Plan. The Plan will state clear goals and actions for career planning, arrangements for work experience, career mentoring and other support to enable young people to gain apprenticeships or other qualifications. The Integrated Youth Support Service provides advice and access to work placements and employability schemes for young people, including, for example, the Croydon Apprenticeship Scheme and the Croydon Work Experience Team. The range of resources to help young people to access work experience is accessed from the EET advisers based at the Turnaround Centre.
Appendix 1

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR CARE LEAVERS

1. Financial Support to Care Leavers

1.1 Background

Each young person will have a different set of needs and different capacity to manage money. Some may have sources of income of their own, such as employment. In each case, Croydon must agree, with the young person, a personal support package and how it is to be managed, with the details recorded in the young person's Pathway Plan.

1.2 Definitions

Reference should be made to the relevant Regulations currently in force and Guidance for the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 (and Children Act 1989 as a starting point) for detailed information of the legal and policy framework. Below is a guide to categories under the Act. It is important to establish which category a young person falls into as the first stage of assessing need for financial support.

Eligible Young Persons

These are young persons aged 16 or 17 years who have been looked after for a period or periods totaling at least 13 weeks starting from their 14th birthday and are still looked after children, except for young persons with a disability who have had a series of short term pre-planned respite care placements lasting up to 4 weeks. The Council has a duty to support these young people up to the age of 18, wherever they are living, and beyond into independence, if they become former relevant young persons. (See paragraphs 6b and 6c of Leaving Care Policy.) The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 (Volume 2) requires that a thorough assessment of the young person's needs is undertaken to inform the actions for achievement in the Pathway Plan (see 7), that the Pathway Plan is reviewed, and that a worker is appointed as personal adviser to the young person.

Relevant Young Persons

These are young persons aged 16 or 17 who have already left care but were previously looked after for a total of at least 13 weeks from the age of 14, and at some time during their 16th or 17th year. This does not apply to a young
person who has returned to their home from care and this has been 
successfully maintained for a period of 6 months or more. A young person is 
also relevant if, having been looked after for three months or more, he or she 
is then detained after their 16th birthday either in a hospital, remand centre, 
young offenders’ institution or in a secure training centre. There is a duty to 
support relevant young people up to the age of 18 years, wherever they are 
living.

The Care Leavers Regulations 2010 require the Council to remain in contact 
with relevant young persons, and to undertake the responsibilities outlined in 
6a above.

**Former Relevant Young Persons**

These are young persons aged 18 to 21 years (or up to 25 years if attending 
an agreed course in further or higher education specified in their Pathway 
Plan) who have been eligible and/or relevant and was placed in care subject 
to a Care Order, or remanded into care, or accommodated by voluntary 
agreement. The Care Leavers Regulations 2010 make the same requirements 
of the Council as in 6a and 6b above. These requirements continue until the 
young person becomes 21 or up to 25 in some cases. In setting out goals and 
actions for achievement, the Pathway Plan should also set out timescales for 
completion so that it is clear when the Plan will expire so leaving care services 
can lawfully cease.

For former relevant young persons aged between 21 and under 25 years of 
age and wishing to take up an agreed programme of education, the Care 
Leavers Regulations 2010 make the same requirements of the Council as in 
6a and 6b above, and to provide appropriate assistance by, for example, 
contributing to expenses incurred by the young person in living near the place 
where s/he is receiving education or training; or by making a grant towards 
meeting the costs and expenses of their course, based on the assessment of 
their needs and circumstances and included in the Pathway Plan.

**Young People Qualifying For Advice and Assistance**

**a) Category A Special Guardianship**

These young people are those young persons aged between 16 and 21 who 
are not eligible, relevant or former relevant young persons, but qualify for 
advice and assistance because they are or were subject to a Special 
Guardianship Order prior to their 18th birthday, or who had been looked after 
immediately prior to their becoming subject to a Special Guardianship Order 
or who were looked after children when over the age of 16 years but for less 
than a total of 13 weeks after their 14th birthday. These qualifying young 
persons are known as “category A”. Advice and assistance is provided to 
qualifying young persons by their relevant local authority. This is the last local 
authority in which the young person was a looked after child.
b) Category B Looked After Children

For young persons aged under 21 years of age who were looked after for a period in total of less than 13 weeks after their 16th birthday (starting from their 14th birthday) the local authority is required by Section 24(5) of the Children Act 1989 to provide appropriate advice and assistance. In this case, the relevant local authority is the local authority approached by the young person. These qualifying young persons are known as "category B". However, if a young person aged below 18 years and previously looked after for a period in total of less than 13 weeks after their 16th birthday (starting from their 14th birthday) has returned home she or he is not to be regarded as qualifying for the purpose of Section 24 Children Act 1989, but support should be assessed and provided under Section 17 Children Act 1989 (child in need).

1.3 Disqualification from benefits

Under Section 6 of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 (C(LC)Act) eligible and relevant children are not entitled to Income Support (IS), Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) or Housing Benefit (HB). Relevant lone parents and young disabled people, however, continue to be eligible for benefits, including IS, JSA and any other benefits due to them because of their disability or parental status, but not HB. Independent advice from a welfare-rights specialist should be sought to assist in potential benefits claims.

“Lone parent” is defined as "a person who has no partner and who is responsible for, and a member of the same household as, a child or young person." Those defined as disabled include someone who:

- is entitled to statutory sick pay
- is incapable of work because of incapacity
- has appealed against a decision that they are not incapable of work
- is registered as blind
- is in work but because of a physical/mental incapacity their hours or earnings are 75% or less than that of a person without that disability in the same job
- is in non-advanced education and because of a severe disability they would be unlikely to get a job in the next 12 months (sch.18 of the IS (General) Regulations 1987).

Receipt of benefits will be taken into account when assessing young person’s needs and drawing up their Pathway Plans.
1.4 Other 16 and 17-year-old care leavers who remain entitled to benefits

Young people aged 16 and 17 who are looked after and qualify under s24 Children Act 1989 (that is, they do not meet the period for eligible or relevant young people) remain entitled to benefits.

In addition to benefits, Croydon may provide young people who qualify under s24 with financial assistance, in kind, or, in exceptional circumstances, in cash [s24A] to meet their particular needs. They may also provide assistance in relation to education, training or employment up to the age of 24.

Croydon must also assist care leavers who had been looked after by the local authority and are in residential Further Education or Higher Education by providing vacation accommodation, if needed.

1.5 Benefit Rates

Relevant 16 and 17-year-old care leavers will receive up to the equivalent of the Job Seekers’ Allowance single higher rate for 16 to 17-year-olds.

Income Support Premiums rates apply to lone parents and those with a disability.

1.6 Former relevant young people

Croydon does not have the financial support responsibility for this group of young people. It is expected that the young person’s income should be derived from the same sources as the young person’s peers i.e. employment, benefit entitlement, student loans, etc.

The local authority has duties to former relevant young people to:

a) provide general assistance (s23C(4(c))

b) provide assistance with expenses incurred by the young person living near the place where s/he is (or will be) employed or seeking employment (s23C(4)(a))

c) provide assistance with expenses associated with education and training

d) provide vacation accommodation or funds to secure it for care leavers in Higher Education (s23B (5)

e) provide a bursary to care leavers in Higher Education

f) arrange suitable accommodation to the extent that the young person’s welfare requires it.
It is expected that the young person’s income should be derived from the same sources as the young person’s peers i.e. employment, benefit entitlement, student loans, etc in the absence of which the Council would assess responsibility in a needs assessment and a Pathway Plan under leaving care responsibilities.

1.7 The assessment of financial need and pathway planning

The Children Act 1989 places the assessment of financial needs within a wide range of considerations, including the young person’s:

- health and development
- needs for education, training or employment
- support available from family and others
- practical and independent living skills
- need for care, support and accommodation.

1.8 Local discretion and transparency

Information will be provided to young people setting out what payments will normally be provided (attached).

2. Financial Support – Principles and Standards

2.1 Principles

- Financial support should not provide any incentive for young people to leave care prematurely.
- Financial support should link payment levels to young people with the national income maintenance system, i.e. JSA, Income Support and Housing Benefit.
- Financial support should be sensitive to the needs of young people with disabilities and disadvantaged groups.
- Young people should have increasing control of their personal finance prior to leaving care.
2.2 Standards

Croydon will provide income maintenance up to the appropriate income support level as a minimum requirement.

The payment system will be capable of providing automated payments directly to young people and housing providers.

Croydon will provide flexible payment systems to assist young people who cannot manage their own financial affairs.

Croydon will provide information to young people setting out the payment system, stating what is available and how and when it will be paid.

Where Croydon is arranging accommodation, that accommodation will meet satisfactory minimum standards to comply with the statutory “suitable accommodation” requirement.

Individual payment levels will be clearly set out in Pathway Plans and be kept under regular review as part of the statutory review requirements for Pathway Plans in general.

Croydon will ensure young people have access to a bank account and will negotiate on their behalf if required.

3. Framework for making payments to Care Leavers

The making of payments to care leavers must be informed by the young person's ability to manage their financial affairs and can be considered as a continuum from the care leaver assessed as not ready to manage their own financial resources to a care leaver being able to fully manage on their own. The method of making payments will be assessed and recorded in the Pathway Plan and linked to preparation for independence.

Principles on making decisions relating to the assessment to manage financial affairs

- The highest appropriate level of empowerment will be used
- A young person should be enabled to move up or down the continuum at their pace.
- The scope for choice will be maximised for all young people
- A risk assessment will be undertaken and recorded as to the level of responsibility for each young person
- Every young person should be helped to open a bank account.
All funding paid directly to the care leaver
Assessed as able to manage own financial resources

- Understands and manages own bank account
- Periodic payments
- Appropriate purchases by care leaver (evidenced by receipts)

Payments at regular intervals
- Direct payments to providers
- Supervision of purchases reduced

Payments at short intervals
- Supervision of all payments and purchases
- Direct payments to providers
- Local orders
- Bank account opened

All funding managed by Croydon.
Care leaver assessed as not ready to manage own
**PAYMENT PROCESS**

- **ASSESSMENT OR REASSESSMENT OF NEED**
- **PATHWAY PLAN**
- **SUPPORT PACKAGE IMPLEMENTING THE PATHWAY PLAN**
- **RECORD, MONITOR, REVIEW AND AUDIT**
- **CALCULATE COSTS. IDENTIFY IF OTHER FUNDING RESOURCES AVAILABLE. ASSESS ABILITY OF CARE LEAVER TO MANAGE OWN FINANCIAL RESOURCES. RECORD ON ICS**
- **FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS AGREED BY MANAGER WITH DELEGATED AUTHORITY AND MONITORED BY TEAM MANAGER**
- **PAYMENTS MADE AND RECORDED BY BUSINESS SUPPORT**
- **AUDIT TRAIL COMPLETE**
## PAYMENTS TO YOUNG PEOPLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELIGIBLE IN FOSTERING</th>
<th>ELIGIBLE IN RESIDENTIAL</th>
<th>ELIGIBLE IN SUPPORTED ACC</th>
<th>RELEVANT</th>
<th>FORMER RELEVANT (over 18)</th>
<th>QUALIFYING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WEEKLY MAINTENANCE up to LEVEL OF JOB SEEKER ALLOWANCE</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes to 18</td>
<td>Yes to 18</td>
<td>At 18 need to claim benefit. May need to pay maintenance for 2 weeks until benefits claim is received.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COST OF ACCOMMODATION</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Claim Housing Benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FARES TO COLLEGE</td>
<td>Claim 16 to 19 Bursary</td>
<td>Claim 16 to 19 Bursary</td>
<td>Claim 16 to 19 Bursary</td>
<td>Claim 16 to 19 Bursary</td>
<td>Claim 16 to 19 Bursary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SETTING UP HOME GRANT</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Small purchases for TV etc</td>
<td>£1000 on offer of housing minus any previously paid</td>
<td>£1000 on housing offer minus any previously paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREGNANCY AND MATERNITY</td>
<td>Claim DWP maternity grant at 29 weeks</td>
<td>Claim DWP maternity grant at 29 weeks</td>
<td>Claim DWP maternity grant at 29 weeks</td>
<td>Claim DWP maternity grant at 29 weeks</td>
<td>Claim DWP maternity grant at 29 weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

£2000 over three £2000 over three
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HE BURSARY GRANT</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>years</th>
<th>years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HE VACATION ACCOMMODATION</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Accommodation costs for all vacations</td>
<td>Accommodation costs for all vacations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HE FARES TO VISIT UNIVERSITIES</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Cost of return travel to university at start &amp; end of each term plus visit to the university when applying</td>
<td>Cost of return travel to university at start and end of each term plus visit to the university when applying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CONTINGENCIES AND EMERGENCIES</td>
<td>Through foster carer</td>
<td>Through provider</td>
<td>On assessment by allocated worker</td>
<td>On assessment by allocated worker</td>
<td>On assessment by allocated worker</td>
<td>On assessment by allocated worker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Payment Administration

a) All payments must be agreed either by a manager in line with budget approval levels and will be administered by Business Support. There must be a clear audit trail from agreement to payment. (Team Leaders can approve up to £50, OM up to £100 and then service managers above up to £250)

b) Cash payments should not be used where other methods of payment are possible. Consideration needs to be given to making payments direct into bank accounts.

c) Weekly maintenance will only be paid in cash in exceptional circumstances. Most payments will be made directly into bank current (not savings) accounts through Business Support in the Access to Resources Team.

d) Requests for cash must be submitted to Cashiers, cc’ing Business Support on the Emergency Cash payment form. Cashiers close at 4pm daily. Service users need to provide an ID such as library card/phone bill.

e) Whenever a cash payment is made to any person, a receipt must be obtained. If a member of staff or key worker collects cash on behalf of a young person, that person will also obtain a receipt from the young person when cash is handed over. In these circumstances, this means there is a receipt signed by the member of staff or key worker and by the young person. Business Support will hold both receipts. This ensures a clear audit trail to the young person.

f) Setting Up Home Grants. Most young people claim this grant when they are offered housing at 18. However, many also want to make purchases before their final move when they are in semi-independent accommodation. Business Support will keep an individual record of the amount paid to each young person. Most items should be purchased by non-cash methods.
Croydon Council
Appendix 2

INFORMATION SHEET

FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO CARE LEAVERS

CROYDON COUNCIL
SERVICES FOR OVER 18s AT
TURNAround CENTRE, 51-55 SOUTH END, CROYDON CR0 1BF
PHONE 020 726 6400

SERVICES FOR 16 & 17 YEAR OLDS AT
JEANETTE WALLACE HOUSE, 1 ELDridge ROAD, CROYDON CR9 1AF
PHONE 020 8239 4290

We will help you get the best start in adult life.

We will get you ready to live independently and able to make good decisions about your future.
INTRODUCTION

This information describes how Croydon will provide you with financial and other support and help you gain confidence in handling your money. For everyone, no matter how much or how little money you have, managing it is important. You will receive help to learn to budget and manage your money. This help will come from your social worker, foster carer, keyworker or personal adviser (PA) who will keep in touch with you and be responsible for your pathway plan. We will also help you so that you can take care of your health and development.

What financial support you receive will depend on how old you are and where you live. Wherever you live, you will need to open a bank account. We can help you to do this.

BEFORE YOU ARE 18

Living with foster carers or in a children’s home

After you are 16 but before you are 18, you will still receive pocket money, but as you get older, you will be given more responsibility and will be able to decide how to spend money on clothes and other items. You should be given the opportunity to manage on agreed amounts or given a chance to buy things you need and see what it is like to manage money.

Living in supported accommodation

In this accommodation you have much more independence but you will have the support of a keyworker who helps you towards managing on your own. This accommodation is paid by Croydon and you will be given a weekly living allowance (sometimes called maintenance) up to the level of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA). This will normally be paid into your bank account.

We will make sure you have essential identification documents. These will be:

- Copy of your birth certificate
- Cost of your first passport valid until at least aged 19
- National Insurance Number
- Housing Registration Number

AFTER YOU ARE 18

We will help you move into your own accommodation. You will be registered with
Croydon Housing and have a Housing Registration Number. We will help you obtain suitable accommodation. This accommodation may be supported accommodation to enable you to get ready for greater independence. When you are ready we will help you move to a tenancy of your own through the Croydon Landlord Bonded Scheme. Housing Benefit will cover your costs for accommodation but you will no longer receive a living allowance. You will be expected to work or claim benefit, be in employment or claim a student loan. You will get help and advice to do this.

You can receive financial support for:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting up home grant</th>
<th>£1000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(You can buy small items for your flat before you are 18 but you will need most of the money for your flat when you get a tenancy)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**REMAINING IN EDUCATION**

We will always support and encourage you in your education by helping you towards your goals. You can stay with your foster carer beyond the age of 18 whilst you finish your Year 13. You can receive financial support from:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>16 to 19 Bursary, claimed at your college</th>
<th>Up to £1200 each year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If you are not in education, employment or training, we will arrange for you to see a specialist worker who will work with you to get into education, employment or training.

**EMPLOYMENT**

We will help and advise you into your first job, we will help you with:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fares to work until your first wages</th>
<th>Depends on your journey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work &amp; interview clothes</td>
<td>One payment up to £100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**UNIVERSITY**

Some of you will be living in your own flat and others living in student accommodation, so before you start at university, we will assess what money you need. You will be expected to claim the maximum student loan. In addition, you will receive:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Higher Education Bursary</th>
<th>£2000 over three years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost of return travel to university at start &amp; end of each term plus visit to the university when applying</td>
<td>As required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PARENT, PREGNANCY AND MATERNITY**

We will help you claim benefits when you are 29 weeks pregnant and so that you receive a maternity grant. If you are in education, you will be assisted to claim costs of
child care through Care to Learn if you are between 16 and 19.

SPECIAL EVENTS AND EMERGENCIES

If something unusual or exceptional happens, your social worker or your personal adviser will discuss with you if we are able to provide financial support.
Appendix 3

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC)

UASC making the transition from care to adulthood have both a leaving care status and an immigration status making the planning for that transition a particularly complex process.

Pathway planning needs to cover all areas as for indigenous young people, as well as addressing additional needs arising from their specific immigration issues, which may require setting short term achievable goals whilst the outcome of their asylum claim is being determined.

Possible outcomes of asylum claim:

1. Granted Refugee Status i.e. granted asylum, giving leave to remain for 5 years.

2. Refused asylum but granted Humanitarian Protection (HP), a rare category for UASC as it is granted when the person is at some risk of ‘ill treatment’ in the particular country they left but does not meet the criteria of the Refugee Convention. This grants leave to remain for 5 years.

3. Refused asylum but granted Discretionary Leave (DLR) usually to the age of 17.5 years when the young people can apply for an extension of DLR.

4. Refused asylum with no grant of leave. Further applications/appeals can be made before the 18th birthday, and in these circumstances leave is extended whilst those representations are considered by UKBA. When all appeal rights have been exhausted (ARE), the person becomes no recourse to public funds (NRPF), and must return to the country of origin.

Access to public funds, welfare benefits and other public funds.

The immigration status of former LAC UASC/ care leavers will impact on their entitlement to financial support, and Pathway Plans should address the fact that immigration status may limit education, training and employment opportunities.

Those care leavers with Refugee Status and HP as 1) and 2) above are entitled to claim for/access all the benefits to which indigenous care leavers are entitled including housing benefits. They are entitled to apply for/be accepted for a university place together with the Higher Education Bursary.

Those in 3) above who have submitted an ‘in time’ application for an extension to the DLR are entitled to claim for/access all benefits to which indigenous care leavers are entitled, whilst the UKBA considers the application. They cannot apply for higher education.

Those in 4) above whose applications to extend leave are refused or appeals against refusal are dismissed, will become ineligible for further support and assistance because of the effect of Schedule 3 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
Because these young people are all Appeal Rights Exhausted, they become No Recourse to Public Funds, and ineligible for state benefits or to the Higher Education Bursary. A Human Rights Act assessment will be conducted by the LA to assess eligibility for further support.

Further details can be found in the Council’s Corporate Policy Statement and Corporate Operational Procedures regarding the provision of support to people subject to immigration control and/or with no recourse to public funds.

4. CONSULTATION

The content of this policy is directed by statutory legislation, but its application in practice will be monitored by the multi-agency Looked After Strategic Partnership and by the Corporate Parenting Panel in consultation with the Children in Care Council, the Croydon Foster Carer Association, and the Brighter Futures partnership for unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

5. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS: None

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CONTACT OFFICER: PAUL CHADWICK, Head of Service for Looked After Children, Jeanette Wallace House, telephone, 02087605571