

A young man with dark hair, wearing a white t-shirt, a dark jacket, and a blue backpack, is walking through a doorway. He is carrying a large cardboard box labeled "KITCHEN" in his hands. He is looking up and to the right with a surprised or thoughtful expression. The background is bright, suggesting an outdoor setting. The image is framed by a purple circular graphic on the left and a purple graphic with yellow dots on the bottom right.

coramVoice)))
getting young voices heard

The Grand Campaign

£3,000 for every care leaver: clear rights, fair support and freedom to choose

October 2024

Thank you

We would like to thank the young people who contributed their views to this report. In particular we are grateful to Ace, Anne-Marie, Aria, Charles, Kiron and Rose for their input on the findings and recommendations.

We are also grateful to the A National Voice (ANV) network of children in care councils and participation workers who have helped share the Grand Campaign information and engage care experienced children and young people in our work.

About us

This report is published by Coram Voice as part of the work of A National Voice (ANV).

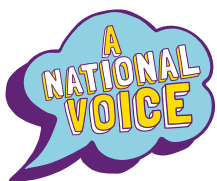
Authors

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Coram Voice

Coram Voice is a leading children's rights organisation, part of the Coram Group of charities.

We champion the rights of children. We get young voices heard in decisions that matter to them and work to improve the lives of children in care, care leavers and others who depend upon the help of the state.



A National Voice

A National Voice (ANV) is the National Children in Care Council of England. Our mission is to bring care experienced young people together to find their voice and use it to improve the lives of all children in care and care leavers. We work with others to amplify young people's voices to create an environment in which young people's views are sought, valued and acted upon.

ANV was established over two decades ago by care experienced young people, to make sure children in care and care leavers' voices were heard at a national level. In 2017, A National Voice joined Coram Voice and continues its work through national projects.

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What is the Grand Campaign?

As stated in the [DfE Transition into Adulthood Guidance](#), all local authorities should help care leavers with the costs of setting up their new home. This help is usually called the Setting Up Home Allowance or the Leaving Care Grant. For consistency, in this report we refer to it as the Setting Up Home Allowance.

On 1 April 2023, the Government raised the minimum amount for this allowance from £2,000 to £3,000.

This money is meant to help care leavers buy essentials like furniture, appliances, and other things they need when moving into their first independent home.

Local authorities are in charge of giving out this allowance.

The increase was part of the Government's plan to improve children's social care.

A National Voice (ANV) found that not all local authorities are giving the full £3,000, and the rules can be different depending on where you live, so they started the Grand Campaign to address this.

Our goals

1

Every local authority should offer the full £3,000 Setting Up Home Allowance to all care leavers up to age 25.

2

Clear and fair rules for everyone.

3

No more postcode lottery – the amount shouldn't depend on where you live.

The whole point of being a corporate parent is ensuring that children and young people in care have the best possible start in life. They need to know they're entitled to this uplift, especially during an economic crisis.

Care experienced young person

The Grand Campaign aims to make sure that all care leavers receive the increased Setting Up Home Allowance amount nationally. We also want to make care leavers more aware of the change in Government policy.

We want to empower care leavers to talk about what is available to them locally and try to achieve a consistent approach across the country.

What did we do?

1

We sent a Freedom of Information (FOI) request to 153 local councils in England to find out if they had increased the Setting Up Home Allowance to £3,000, as the Government recommended. 124 councils (81%) replied to our FOI request.

2

We ran an online workshop with care experienced young people to get their views.

3

Our ANV ambassadors, care experienced young people aged 16-25, helped shape this report and recommendations.



What we found

1

Most authorities pay £3,000

9 out of 10 local authorities report giving £3,000 in Setting Up Home Allowance. But, 11 months after the Government changed its policy, 1 in 10 still gave less. Out of the 11 areas paying less than £3,000, 8 planned to raise it in 2024, but 3 were not sure yet.

2

Big differences

In the area paying the least, care leavers got £1,500, while in the highest paying area, they got nearly £3,500 – more than double!

3

Some get less

Some areas said they offer 'up to' £3,000, meaning some care leavers could still get less than that.

4

Extra financial help

8 out of 10 areas offer extra financial support on top of the Setting Up Home Allowance, like paying for TV licences or a first grocery shop, but what they help with can be different depending on where care leavers live.

5

Unequal support

Two care leavers in similar situations could get different levels of support depending on the local authority that supports them, because the rules on who is eligible for the allowance are really different.

6

Lack of written guidelines

Less than three-quarters (73%) of local authorities have a clear, written policy about the Setting Up Home Allowance, and local authorities refer to the allowance by different names, with different interpretation as to what it covers. Without clear, consistent information it is hard to know your rights and how to make sure you get what you are entitled to.

What we want to see improved

1

Fairness

Every local authority should offer at least £3,000 Setting Up Home Allowance – no exceptions.

2

Clear guidelines

No more confusion! Everyone should have a clear, written document outlining exactly what they are entitled to. The document should be easy to find and easy to understand, so care leavers know their rights and can speak up if they don't get what they have a right to.

3

Freedom to choose

Care leavers should have more control over how they spend their money.

4

£3,000 for all care leavers

ANV want every care leaver, up to age 25, to get the full £3,000 to help set up their home.

5

Enough support

The allowance should cover everything young people need to start out in their own home.

6

Regular reviews

The Setting Up Home Allowance must be looked at least every year to make sure it keeps up with rising costs.

How we gathered evidence for this report

Freedom of Information Request (FOI)

A Freedom of Information Request (FOI) is a formal way for individuals to ask the government or public organisations for information they hold. It is a tool that allows someone to ask for specific details or documents about their activities, decisions, or policies.

A National Voice used an FOI to investigate what different local authorities provided in their Setting Up Home Allowance for care leavers. Talking to care leavers we found that not all local authorities made sure their care leavers receive the full £3,000. Our goal was to gather evidence of what support care leavers receive. This evidence will be really important when approaching government leaders about this policy. We aim to show whether the uplift is working for care leavers or if further action is needed to better support care leavers.

Between March–April 2024 A National Voice sent out an FOI request to all local authorities in England to find out more about their Setting Up Home Allowance.

We asked each local authority how much the allowance is, whether there are plans to increase it to £3,000 this year and who is entitled to it. We also asked whether they have a policy on this and to share it with us.

Gathering young people's views

Share my story

We developed a 'share my story' form for care experienced young people to share their experiences of setting up home. Real stories are valuable because they show the impact of policies on children and young people in everyday life. They can help decision makers understand what it is like to be care experienced and how to better support care-experienced children and young people. All responses are anonymised.

Online workshops

We held an online workshop for care experienced young people who were interested in the campaign or wanted to know more. The aim was to explore the campaign pack, share the timeline of events, and how they could get involved. It gave space for care leavers to start a national conversation on their experiences of the Setting Up Home Allowance. We also held workshops to review the findings and recommendations with our ANV Ambassadors.



What local authorities told us

How many local authorities responded?

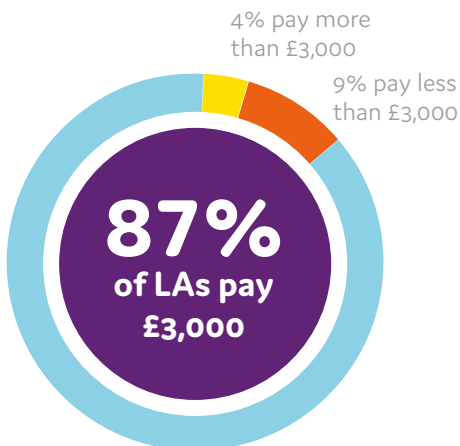
We sent out a Freedom of Information request to all local authorities in England during March 2024.



We received 124 responses. This is 81%, or four out of five, of the 153 local authorities in England.

How much do care leavers receive?

9 out of 10 local authorities paid £3,000, but just under 1 in 10 did not.



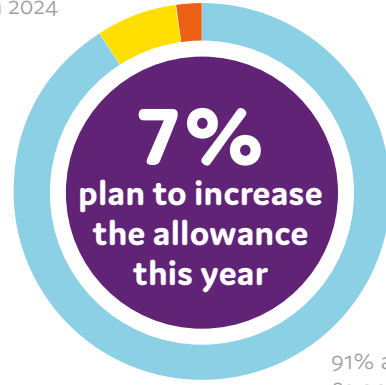
108 (87%) of local authorities gave care leavers a £3,000 Setting Up Home Allowance, 5 (4%) gave more, and 11 (9%) less.

The lowest amount paid was £1,500 and the highest was £3,479.

Are local authorities increasing their allowance?

7% plan increase to £3,000 in 2024

2% don't know if they will increase the allowance



91% already pay £3,000 or more

Out of the 11 local authorities who reported paying less than £3,000, eight were planning to increase it during 2024, but three did not yet know whether it would be increased.

Five local authorities who did not provide £3,000 gave further details.

They said:

The revised policy is awaiting sign off.

We are currently reviewing how much to raise it by.

[it] will also depend on individual circumstances.

We increased it to £3,000 on 1.4.24.

This is currently being considered by senior leaders.

Some of those who reported that they offered £3,000 used wording such as 'up to' £3,000, suggesting some care leavers could still receive less. They said:

Up to a maximum of £3,200.

Those young people who have left care after 1st April 2023 are able to access up to £3,000.

We will support young people moving to independent accommodation with a Setting up Home, the maximum total amount is £3,000.

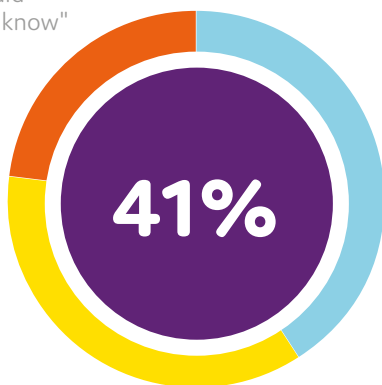
All requests for additional finances are submitted to our finance panel – if young people require additional items on the setting up home allowance list these can be requested up to the value of £3,000 per young person.

We look to spend the full amount of the – up to £3,000 per young person moving into their own tenancy. Assessments are undertaken of need and young people are helped with purchasing items. We cannot provide full figures as young people are:

- Able to draw a small amount of their when moving into semi-independent.*
 - May move into an enhanced tenancy where white goods, window covering, flooring and decoration are provided at source whilst some may move into housing association properties where this isn't the case.*
- We therefore may pay more than £3,000 for those young people if the need arises in those Housing Association properties, whilst paying less for those in enhanced tenancies as they have received new items in kind as part of their final tenancy offer. We try to ensure the value is the same so that all young people are equally benefiting. We may also use any monies left over towards their first rent etc.*

Do care leavers get the uplift if they've already accessed the allowance?

23% said "don't know"



36% of local authorities said care leavers couldn't request the uplift if they had already access their allowance

50 (41%) local authorities said yes, care leavers who had already accessed the could get an uplift, 45 (36%) local authorities said no and 30 (23%) did not know.

41% of local authorities said care leavers could request the uplift if they had already accessed the allowance

This question tried to work out whether those care leavers who had got their allowance when it was lower would be eligible for an uplift, but the comments suggested that respondents interpreted the question in different ways and so this data should be treated cautiously.

For example, two local authorities who appeared to describe similar policies, answered differently (yes and no).

Yes, if they turned 18 on or after 1st April 2023

No, the uplift to £3,000 is provided to all care experienced people reaching 18 after 31st March 2023.

Further analysis of different comments showed that there was no consistent approach to eligibility.

How do local authorities decide who gets the allowance?

By age

Some local authorities focused on age-led criteria (e.g. turning 18 after the Government changed the policy) to decide who would get the . They said

Anyone who turned 18 after April 2023 will have £3,000.

Setting Up Home Allowance is payable at any time up until a young person reaches 25.

No, if the care leaver turned 18 prior to 1 April 2023, they would not have been eligible to request an uplift and they would have received £2,000 setting up home allowance.

Yes, if they were under 21 as of 01/04/23, if they were over 21 they can access the £2,000 plus an additional £500 if they need flooring.

By housing status

Other local authorities linked getting the allowance to when young people accessed their first tenancy (own rented property) or moved into independent living. They said:

Over 18 is dependent on circumstances and if they have not had their first tenancy yet.

The funds are allocated based on need of items for independent living, i.e. we ensure that care leavers have all the items they need, we track this and care leavers can access items they have not already received.

If a care leaver accessed their set up and moved prior to Feb 2023 (Stable Homes, Built On Love) then they were not entitled to anymore. However, if a care leaver has not accessed their full amount and still reside in a supported accommodation/staying put arrangement then they are entitled to the full £3,000. Individual circumstances are taken into consideration

If they moved into their permanent property after 1 April 2023

By legal status

Some local authorities focused on young peoples' care or other legal status, i.e. when young people left care or immigration status. They said:

Not if they left care before the uplift was agreed.

Those young people who have left care after 1st April 2023 are able to access up to £3,000

If the young person, (YP), is a separated mi child, and gets status after their 18th birthday, then it will be £3,000 or if the YP has spent less than half of their grant by the 1/3/24 then they will receive £3,000.

By previous access

Other local authorities stressed whether the allowance/ had already been accessed.

No, they would not be eligible for the uplift if they had already accessed their .

If a young person received less than the current amount which is £3,000 / £3,500 they would not be able to receive an uplift, as they would have been entitled to the amount that was in place at the time of receiving their setting up home allowance.

If a young person received the Setting Up Home Allowance prior to April 2023 they will not be able to request an uplift. However, if they started receiving their SUHA after the new amount was implemented in 2023, they will receive the full £3,000 regardless of how much of it they have received to date.

If they were eligible for leaving care prior to the date the leaving care grant amount increased they will not qualify for the £3,000, if they were eligible after the increase and did not receive the full amount of £3,000 they will be able to access the difference.

By how much of the allowance/ has already been accessed

Some local authorities focused on the proportion of their allowance/ already accessed by care leavers. They said:

If a care leaver received more than half of their prior to 01.04.2023, the balance would reflect the level of the applied at that time (£2,000), if a care leaver received less than half of the before 01.04.2023, the balance should reflect the higher level.

If some of the has been accessed the young person would still be able to claim up to £3,000, if all of the had been previously accessed we would not then provide a further £1,000.

On a discretionary basis

Several local authorities had a discretionary system (decisions based on judgment, rather than following rules or guidelines) and the amount offered was based on an assessment of individual circumstances. For example they said:

If they had accessed some of the SUHA it is manager's discretion whether we agree to pay the remainder at the low rate of £2,000 or the high rate of £3,000. In practice we have had one request so far and agreed the higher rate, and would anticipate doing so in general.

Yes, we have a finance panel where requests for additional allowances increases can be made to a care leavers SUHA and if there is a need then this will be uplifted to the new amount.

Care leavers who had accessed less than 50% of their automatically receive the uplift introduced in April 2023. For care leavers up to the age of 25 who have spent all or most of their prior to April 2023 we have introduced a process to look at requests for discretionary additional allocation.

This depends on whether the young person turned 18 after 01/04/23 when the uplift came into effect. All care leavers can

have a financial assessment by Welfare to ensure their income is being maximised. A [Personal Advisor] PA can also apply to our Discretionary Funding Panel for any additional financial support they need.

Available to all

Yet other local authorities suggested all care leavers or all care leavers open to the service could be eligible.

Yes – For those care leavers who have accessed their setting up allowance of previously £2,000 since April 2023 an uplift to the current £3,000 can be applied.

Yes – young people will receive what they need when they move into their final tenancy up to and sometimes beyond £3,000.

Where there is a current care leaver (Currently supported and open to the Leaving Care Team) where we have already paid less than the £3,000 (e.g. the old rate was £2,000 so some were paid that), in those instances we have/will agree to pay the balance up to £3,000. We have been doing this all of 23/24 - this includes all/any cases that were closed ... in 23/24, they are eligible to get in contact to request the balance to £3,000 as their case was closed AFTER the rate was increased. However, any cases closed to AFC before 01/04/23, as their case was closed before we were officially advised to increase the Allowance from 01/04/23, such cases would not be eligible for any further payments above the old rate of £2,000.

Yes, if they were under 25 as of 1st April 2023.

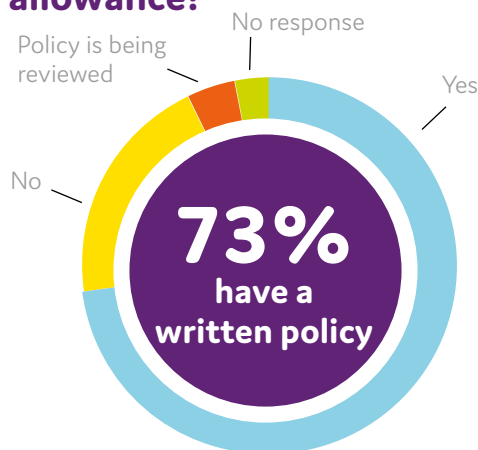
No existing policy

A few local authorities had not yet finalised their policy:

This is currently being considered by senior leaders.

The revised policy is awaiting sign off.

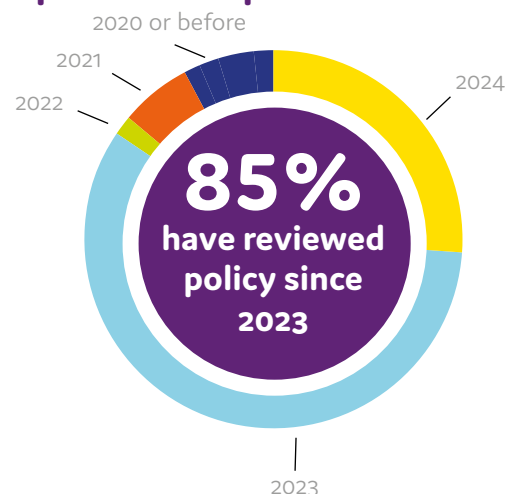
Do local authorities have written policies on the allowance?



Of the 124 local authorities:

- 91 (73%) of local authorities had a written policy, some referred to a financial policy, others to their local offer for care leavers
- 25 (20%) local authorities did not have a written policy
- 5 (4%) local authorities reported that they were in the process of reviewing the policy
- 4 (3%) did not respond and did not provide any further information.

When did local authorities last update their policies?



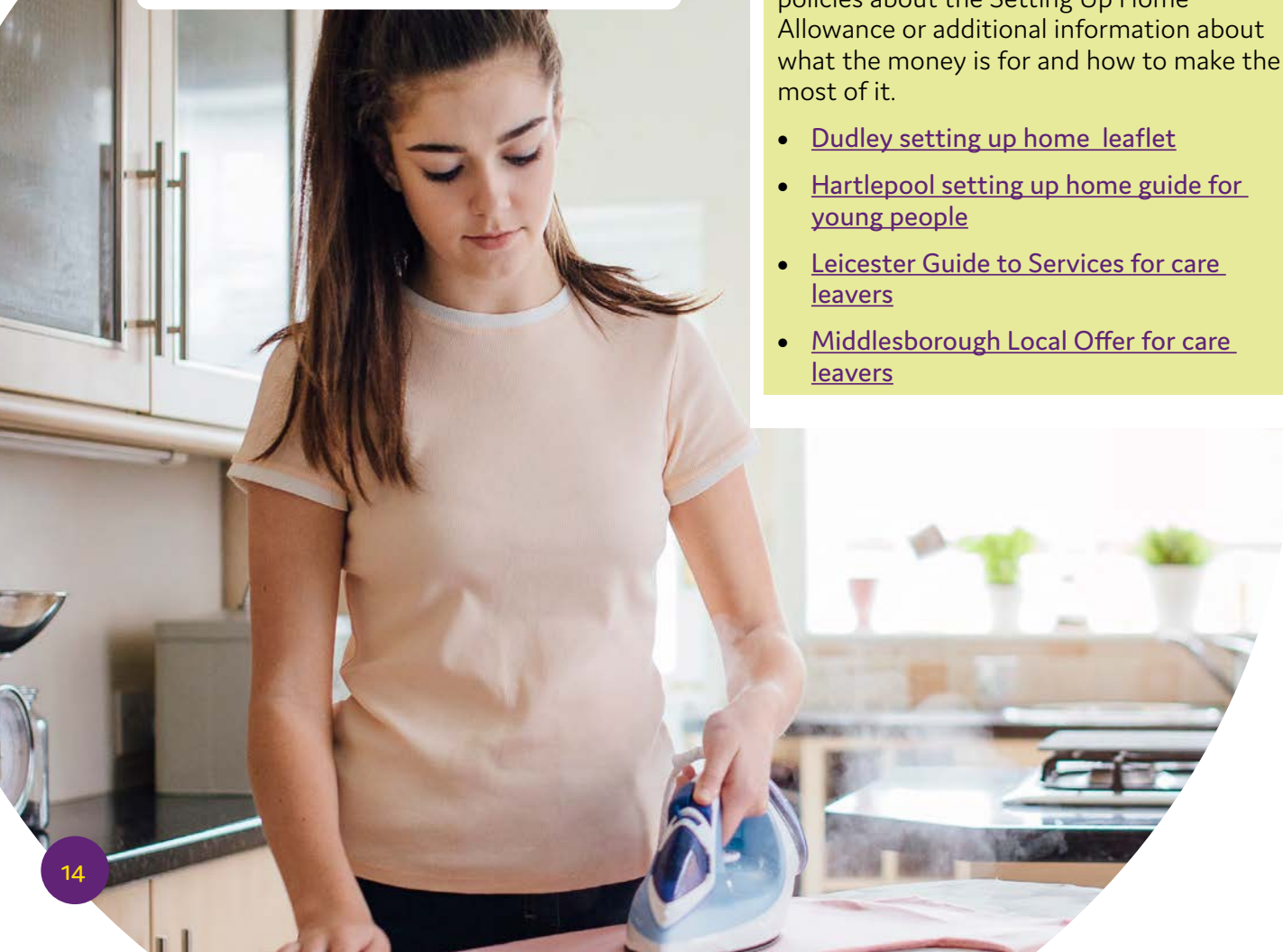
Of the 91 authorities that had a written policy,

- 85% had reviewed this policy since 2023 (26% in 2024 and 59% in 2023)
- 15% had not reviewed it since the Allowance was changed (1% in 2022, 6% in 2021, and 8% in 2020 or before)

Examples of policies

Some local authorities have separate policies about the Setting Up Home Allowance or additional information about what the money is for and how to make the most of it.

- [Dudley setting up home leaflet](#)
- [Hartlepool setting up home guide for young people](#)
- [Leicester Guide to Services for care leavers](#)
- [Middlesbrough Local Offer for care leavers](#)



What other types of financial support are available for care leavers?

We were aware that care leavers may get more financial support in some areas and tried to explore what was offered in addition to the Setting up Home Allowance.

Does your local authority pay for any of the following items for care leavers in addition to the setting up home allowance?

Type of additional support	Number of local authorities providing
First grocery shop	46
TV licence	42
Broadband costs	38
Mobile phone costs	29
Utility bills	25
Home redecoration costs	24
Carpets	21
House content insurance	19
Cooking Equipment	18
Furniture	15
White goods	15
Other	42

The most common areas of financial support, in addition to the Setting Up Home Allowance, was first grocery shop and TV licence, offered by over a third of local authorities

While what they helped varied, most local authorities (82%) offered at least one additional type of support from our list, and almost half (44%) help in three or more of the different areas.

In comments, some described arrangements with local suppliers, housing providers, charities, food banks or accessing other government funds like the [Household Support Fund](#) in order to help the Setting Up Home Allowance go further. Others outlined how they provided cash, vouchers or items in kind.

Some provision appeared to be available to all care leavers whereas other help was only provided in some cases.

Several offered welcome and starter packs that included some of the types of items described.

Other support included assistance with rent, security/safety, removal costs and help for new parents.

As well as answering the FOI by selecting the items in the given table, many local authorities provided further detail and clarification of additional support. A selection of these are included over the page.

What other support do local authorities provide for care leavers?

First grocery shop

We provided a Home box which includes all food and cleaning cupboard contents plus a ten pounds voucher for first meal.

Yes, support is provided for food parcels / basic shop if other support options have been exhausted.

TV licence

We pay the first year TV licence.

Broadband and mobile phone

Sky Up packages have been offered to up to 50 Young People. IT costs up to £300 could be provided if they are in education or training but consideration is given to circumstances.

Reduced cost broadband package for all care leavers. Some accommodation providers provide broadband. We will provide 6 months based on need for example if on low wage.

Yes, through our local recycle IT scheme - we can also supply an emergency phone. Internet through our offer with virgin.

[We provide] SMART Phone/Laptop access to the internet, support to access DWP broadband offers

Young people can apply for a of up to £250 to support the first 12 months of Broadband when moving to independent living via the digital inclusivity fund.

As a care leaver you can access the digital Inclusion offer, which includes. • 17 GB of Wifi • One free device • Opportunities for support and training.

Utility bills

No – however we often top these up.

We do offer emergency support at times of crisis.

No can access low tariffs and additional support if in difficulties.

We have a formal agreement with a water company for discounted bills.

Redecorating costs

Separate B&Q voucher provided by Housing.

If in [council] tenancy property, gets painted/new blinds fitted.

Decorating vouchers are provided to young people via the property lettings team.

Carpets and flooring

Can be funded through HSF (Housing support fund) or via a local charity.

Working in conjunction with LA Housing to make sure whenever possible carpet and paint is including in the accommodation.

If young people move into Council Housing home, they are provided with carpets for two rooms.

For those young people moving to a tenancy where there is no flooring and this can't be purchased out of the allocated £3,000 Leaving Care Grant, consideration is to be given for a one off payment of up to £500 out of the general Leaving Care budget again for them not to be in disadvantaged with young people who move in to tenancies where flooring is provided (i.e. housing associations).

Cooking equipment

Air Fryers provided in 2023 to all YP who live independently.

Care leavers can apply for Citizens Support Scheme Home Needs Award.

£150 starter kit which can be spent on cooking equipment or food etc.

We provide all young people in supported accommodation with a semi-independent of £150 to purchase essential household items such as pots and pans, crockery, cutlery, bedding etc.

Furniture

Have access to upcycled furniture at no cost.

Yes, care leavers can apply for Citizens Support Scheme Home Needs Award.

White goods

We have access to housing support fund in 23 to 24 which we used for white goods and cooking equipment. Should we be successful bidding again in 24 to 25 we will use this again.

We are able to apply to a fund via our social housing provider for two white goods items.

PA's will access charities for funding for white goods, carpets to make the money go further.

Rent

Council provides 2 weeks rent free for Care Leavers in the City, for those outside of the city and for those YP in Housing Association Properties.

We also have stepped in when rent arrears accrue and there are difficulties with paying utilities but are one off pieces of support in exceptional circumstances.

For care leavers accessing privately rented

accommodation we provide deposit and first 4 weeks of rental costs.

Other types of support

Take away meal on first night.

All care leavers exempt from paying Council Tax to 25 years.

Setting up home box which includes food & cleaning products.

We pay for transport to move their furniture.

Also pay for health and safety pack and security (up to £100) and removal costs (up to £150).

If the care leaver is an expecting/parent then we support them with an additional £500.

Ring doorbell/new home cleaning starter pack.

Free installation of white goods within the local Covenant offer.

Whilst we do not pay for any of the items listed, we do provide financial support to them in line with their needs and have a financial policy in place attached setting out the financial support we provide including discretionary payments.

Sanitary products from Period Poverty Fund, Maternity Baby box, Maternity Clothes.

10 driving lessons, first theory test and provision license. University fees for three years.

What policies do local authorities have for paying the allowance?

To further understand different local authorities' approaches to the Setting Up Home Allowance we looked at the policies provided by respondents. As with the limits on who was entitled to the allowance, there were different approaches in different areas.

Developing financial skills

Several local authorities described how the Setting Up Home Allowance is part of the support that is offered to care leavers to develop their financial skills. They said:

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.

This payment is an important mark of your independence, so we will want you to spend it wisely and on things that will help you to make this important step towards independence.

As responsible Corporate Parents, [who] aim 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.

How do care leavers access the allowance?

We found variations in how the money would be provided. In some areas the money was provided directly to young people.

Payments will be made directly into your bank account in most circumstances. This will be discussed with you by your social worker or personal advisor.

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.

In others professionals managed the money and supported young people to spend it. Some offered some of the money as cash or vouchers; some required receipts.

We will pay setting up home allowance in instalments of up to £500 once receipts have been provided verifying previous setting up home allowance payments.

You can have up to £250 cash from this allowance to purchase smaller items yourself. In order to receive this money, your PA will need to be confident this will be spent on items to set up your home.

Your personal advisor will need to have a copy of your tenancy agreement before money can be released.

Some local authorities shared how they had amended the way in which young people could access their allowance

Young people told us they did not like using council order forms to buy their goods because there is limited choice, and the order form identifies them as requiring council support. As a result, personal advisors will have access to other payment methods.

What advice or assistance do care leavers receive?

Some local authority policies described the role of professionals in managing or advising on how to use the Setting Up Home Allowance. The role of Personal Advisors and the Pathway Planning process were highlighted in several policies.

You can access your setting up home allowance and purchase essential items in a discussion with your Personal Adviser. This will need to be agreed in your pathway plan.

To choose items you really need from the essential items list and only essential items for your home may be purchased. This will need to be agreed in your Pathway Plan.

In most cases, the 11+ Service Personal Advisor or another person designated in their place (for example an ex-foster carer or a supported housing worker) should supervise the spending of any setting up home money. This is because it should be a learning exercise and the young person should be helped to achieve value for money, although this does not always mean buying the cheapest items... There are occasions when the young person's maturity is such that they may be able to spend the agreed money themselves. In these cases part payment can be released with the promise of the next payment when the young person returns with receipts as appropriate.

We will also give you a £75.00 moving in voucher to buy smaller items such as tea towels, saucepans, cups, cutlery, plates and cleaning products. This is so you have these ready on your move-in day. PAs have a list of where you can find the best prices for these items.

This will be paid in 3 instalments, and you will be given advice and guidance through the Pathway Plan on how best to spend the money.

How much choice do care leavers get?

There was a wide variety in how much choice care leavers were given in how to spend the allowance. Some local authorities gave care leavers more choice than others.

Only essential items for your home may be purchased. This will need to be authorised by a team manager, service manager or head of service depending on the value.

Payments will be made directly into your bank account in most circumstances. This will be discussed with you by your social worker or personal advisor.

There are restrictions on how this can be

spent and it cannot be given in cash. Your PA will need to support you with purchasing items and they can advise you about how and when this can be used.

Some policies were specific about what items the allowance would be spent on.

The service expects that all young people take out the necessary contents insurance to protect their belongings. The service will not be liable to replace an individual's belongings in the case of damage or theft. Payment for insurance should come from a young person's setting up home allowance or their general income.

This allowance includes the cost of providing the first year's television licence and content's insurance, if that can be.

Is there a cut-off age?

We found that there were different rules as to when the Setting Up Home Allowance should be spent.

It is expected that you will (with support if required) spend the full amount of your LCG before your 25th birthday, even if you no longer receive a service (for example, if you are aged 21+). There may be exceptional circumstances where we can extend this entitlement beyond your 25th birthday - you can discuss this with the Leaving Care Team.

For young people planning to access long-term accommodation after the age of 21, the SUHA 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).

This is available until the age of 21, or until the completion of education/training.

In exceptional circumstances and with agreement with the Next Step Service Manager it may be necessary to request setting up home allowance monies to be held and withdrawn after their 25th birthday.

Are there reductions or restrictions?

Many local authorities worked with partners to add to the support available with setting up home, but, we also found examples of allowances being reduced if help could be accessed elsewhere.

You may also be eligible for monies through the Household Support or other cost of living funds or charities that are available in line with the current cost of living crisis. If you are eligible for other s and funds, the amount received will be deducted from the maximum setting up home allowance available from the Leaving Care Service.

Who they lived with could make a difference to what care leavers were entitled to.

If you decide to live with a friend or partner then you can access half of your setting up costs at first. This is to ensure you are settled and happy and don't spend all your money at once because if you move, you could be left with nothing.

If you return to live with your family then you will not be provided with these setting up costs while living there. You may be able to get help with items such as a bed or furniture if this helps you settle at home. You can access your setting up costs up to age 25 even if you have left the service as long as you have your name on a tenancy.

There was a variety of specific types of support in different local authorities.

We are signed up to the Care Leaver Covenant (CLC) campaign, to improve provision and services for care leavers in England. We have developed a fund to provide care leavers with a new energy-saving air fryer once you secure your first tenancy agreement and move into your permanent home. Speak to your PA about the Air Fryer fund.

We will give you access to the council's staff discount scheme. This gives you discounts on a whole range of shops and services across the city and beyond (e.g. restaurants, local and national supermarkets, and cinema tickets).

You can get 70% off your water bill if you live in an area covered by [Water Company].

We've got short term storage units in [town] that you can use if you need to store belongings for up to three months.

Can the allowance be used for other costs?

Some local authorities advised that the allowance could be used to help maintain employment or training so that care leavers could can maintain their accommodation.

We will hold back £500 of the £3,000 setting up home allowance to cover any rent arrears or payment for damages that occur before you reach the point of moving. You must make agreed payments for rent, and you must not damage property or properties deliberately.

You can access up to £500 to support you in your semi-independent living or to manage any financial emergencies you may experience such as being in debt.

This money can be used for the first month's rent and your first television licence.

However, some policies stressed that the allowance couldn't be used to assist with other costs.

The grant is not intended to meet the costs of personal support or accommodation costs.

Does the allowance cover broken or replacement items?

Local authorities had varying policies on whether the allowance covered broken items.

[We provide] Up to an extra £200 to cover broken or forgotten items, with the agreement of your personal advisor and their team manager.

We also advise and encourage a young person to leave some reserves in case replacements or repairs are required.



What young people told us

We held an online session for care-experienced young people to share their views and experiences relating to the setting up home allowance. We talked to young people about:

- The things they would have wanted when setting up home
- What they would do if they had the extra £1,000
- What would make the process better
- What freedom they had in managing the money

We also had feedback from young people through an online 'My Story' form. We looked at all the things young people said and have pulled together key themes and their views.



Fairness and transparency

Young people felt it was unfair that there were different rules in different areas.

Because of favouritism - it causes us to feel bitter and to resent the government. We might do better if we felt we were treated the same everywhere. Where I'm born shouldn't dictate my future.

Some young people said that using the words like 'you may' or 'up to' felt unclear and unfair.

By saying 'you may' and up to £3,000, it's unclear what each person may receive, also the government says the minimum is £3,000 so not 'up to'. Does that mean some young people get more and some less? How is that fair?

Missing essentials

Some young people who had already accessed their allowance still lacked essentials.

Probably a bed frame and a wardrobe coz I can't organise anything like my clothes and curtains and I have no privacy that's what I would like if I had an extra £1,000.

Since I've moved from temp and I didn't have a bed then and I had to throw it away and I've not had the money myself to buy a new one and I've still not got one and I've asked and asked coz I can't just sleep on a mattress on the floor so I've been sleeping on my sofa.

Different needs at different times

The DfE Transition into Adulthood Guidance suggests that there is a set time when young people move into independence and set up their first home. In reality, this can be a gradual process, living in different types of accommodation and needing different items at different times. Most care leavers do not move into their own flat at 18, but live in many different arrangements with different people (see Appendix for a breakdown).

In September I moved into university halls. This experience for me was both good and bad. I received little support from my local authority in funding this move, but I did however gain some independence and it helped me develop home skills.

My experience of setting up my own home was not good. £2,000 to set up a home just wasn't enough especially due to my health I could of done with more appliances however I simply couldn't afford it as I only had £2,000. The local authority spent around £600-700 of my leaving care grant on storage for my things as I ended up in a mental health unit.

Practice example: Local policy on allowance at different stages

If you are a young person entering supported lodgings or living in staying put, you can access up to £500 to personalise your room. A record of items you receive will be made and this will be taken off any later setting up home allowance you may receive if you move to your own tenancy.

Replacements

Other young people stressed the importance of being able to replace broken or old goods.

[With an extra £1000 I would buy] A new mattress as mine has broken springs.

[An extra £1,000 would] Help me to purchase items I didn't know I would need at first when moving in. I can buy a new mattress to help with my back ache & pains I can use it buy more furnishing for my child.

[With an extra £1,000] I would replace some appliances that are quite old, I can't afford to do this out right.

I have approached the local authority to ask about this extra £1,000 however they have refused this money despite me being 24. I could of done with this money to help buy a dishwasher and also a washing machine and dryer as mine has broken. But unfortunately due to not being able to afford I have no dryer or washing machine. A dishwasher would be helpful as my physical health plays up so I don't have energy to wash up. I have tried fighting for this money but they have refused as apparently they haven't got the money from the government.

Sometimes cheaper things break down more quickly and one young person said:

[If I had an extra £1,000 I would have the] ability to buy decent stuff rather than cheap stuff.

The young people thought about how to manage the allowance to deal with emergencies and breakages. They said:

Buy everything we need with enough left over in case we need it further down the line. Such as damage to our property.

I can save it for emergencies

Yet, it was also important that there was enough to cover essentials and save what was left.

I wasn't allowed to spend the full amount, I was told I had to have a 'safety' fund spare, which kind of defeats the point. Especially since I spent all the money and still needed essentials.

Other young people spoke about how additional funds could help them redecorate or make their place more homely.

It would help me redecorate.

[With an extra £1000 I would get] a dressing gown, slippers, hot water bottle, a small speaker so I can listen to music, a cat tower, plants, paint, decorations. I'd make my house a home.

Practice example: Local policy on replacements

[we offer] up to an extra £200 to cover broken or forgotten items, with the agreement of your personal advisor and their team manager.

Advice and assistance

Young people stressed the importance of having people who can help them manage the move into independence and their first home.

[I wanted, but did not have] support.

[I wanted, but did not have] a proper transition plan.

[I wanted, but did not have] Someone on 24/7 standby to advise if something went wrong. I moved in and there was debt on my gas box. Also, when my fuse blew I had no idea what to do.

Really bad, didn't have the help to set up my new home and didn't know how to set things up like bills, furniture, moving my stuff etc.)

Some also said that if they had a good Personal Advisor then they felt they had a better experience:

Maybe it's a case of having someone there who's able to be knowledgeable and what care-experienced people need.

Practical support

Other young people missed practical support with moving into a new home. They said:

Support with moving (like being given moving boxes and suitcases).

Access to tools, I didn't have proper curtains up for a long time, there were blinds instead and they weren't very sturdy or good quality. They broke easily.

Appropriate size van to actually move a household, someone to help with moving as have to pay for a handy man which is really expensive for a whole day. Suitable storage to make day to day activities.



Choice

The young people wanted choice about how to use their allowance, including being able to spend more on items that were important to them. Many felt that they did not have the freedom to decide how the Setting Up Home Allowance was spent. They said

[I wanted, but did not have] more of a choice as to what I spent my on. It was very much monitored and not that much freedom.

I had a dream to have a nice new sofa. Like a new one not second hand x I also wanted a really nice fridge freezer instead of my under counter one.

I never got to have any of the actual money, it was all spent for me.

Everything I bought went through my PA. I gave a suggested list but it was pretty much ignored. The PA was great, I just think they maybe had someone higher up directing things.

Some spoke of restrictive systems where you could only use certain shops, buy certain goods or needed to follow complicated systems to use the allowance.

It felt impersonal like a checklist of belongings that could belong to anyone.

It was limited, had to ask higher up if we could have the items.

*Oh yes indeed as we have to get confirmation from managers before we get an answer so we have to wait like week or two and they have to buy it for us. My first PA went with me and my second PA just bought it for me and some things I didn't want like a cheap s**t oven and a small fridge freezer which was unfair as I didn't even get to see it as it's going into my flat*

Kinda freely I had to ask about everything and if I could get like say a gas oven which is like £30-£40 more I had to get like a cheaper option like a electric I've. And I think they're crap. So had to go for a cheaper one so that's an example but something like that. But could be more freely as would like more important stuff like big furniture than little things like wardrobe, ovens, beds etc.

I was only allowed to buy from certain stores. Mainly second hand warehouses or charity shops. It was a waste of money because I knew it would all be replaced eventually.

It was hard lots of red tape.

Practice example: Local policy increasing choice

Young people told us they did not like using council order forms to buy their goods because there is limited choice, and the order form identifies them as requiring council support. As a result, personal advisors will have access to other payment methods.

Young people said their entitlements were not always made clear and they had to challenge to get what they wanted and needed. They said:

Somewhat of a choice. But I wasn't informed for everything I was eligible for.

Not really at all, I had to argue tooth and nail for everything I got.

Not easy. Took me weeks of asking. My PA had to go to managers for authorization.

Trust

An important part of moving into independence is learning to make your own choices, yet many care leavers said that they did not feel trusted, or that the systems assumed that they would be unable to manage:

No. I felt like I was about to commit fraud. I remember crying and panicking over a lost receipt for £10. I couldn't sleep all weekend and when I spoke to my social worker she told me I was reckless.

It's ironic because we're not trusted but not given opportunity to prove we are trustworthy. And how can we learn if we don't try!

I felt my PA trusted me, but the system in place and policies they had to follow didn't. As though it's a given that because we're CEP, we'll blow the money or pose a risk with it.

Some care leavers said it was seen as Supporting Independence:

The whole point of pushing for independence, learning where best to spend your money and how to plan that accordingly.

When they tell you what you should be having, that's not preparing you for independence because when you're independent, you're not just given one option.

Other financial support needs

While most Setting Up Home Allowances focus on one-off initial costs, there are many ongoing costs that make it difficult for young people on low incomes to manage. This included bills and rent.

[I wanted, but did not have] Support with paying bills.

[I would like help with] rent.

It could also include transport costs or the means to travel more independently by getting driving lessons or a scooter.

And driving lesson as would help with traveling and saving money in travel and it would help to go and see my son.

Electric scooter to help make travelling easier.

Like bus passes, driving lessons.

If I can use it to help me get my driver's license that would be great. I'm 22 and don't think I'll be able to drive or afford a car for years :(would love some freedom. I feel trapped and confined.

Some care leavers spoke about wanting financial help to allow them to save or by equipment like a laptop.

Savings, invest in business ideas, donate.

I'd love to use it towards a new laptop too, I don't have word and can't work on my CV without it.



Our recommendations

Care leavers described a system where they did not always feel supported and trusted. Processes could be complicated, stressful and what they got felt like a lottery. Clear information about their rights and entitlements was not always available. Some young people did not feel they had enough to cover the costs of what they needed.

However, the Setting Up Home Allowance also has the potential to help care leavers develop their money management skills and make their new home theirs. Young people want both greater choice and support to manage their money.

These are our recommendations for making things better for care leavers.



A fair system

When policy is changed on a national level, it is important to make sure it is rolled out across the country. Young people spoke about the 'postcode lottery', with different rules in different areas, and how it made them feel when some young people were less well off than others.

It sometimes feels like we're the less favoured child, since some areas get better treatment, it's as though the government don't care that we feel less favoured in areas. It hurts to be the less favoured.

Although it is positive that most local authorities had raised the allowance, not all had, and for some their policies described it as a maximum rather than a minimum amount, contrary to national guidance. This means that many young people are worse off than others.

'If there's discrepancies by region or nationally... I think that muddies the water and makes what was quite a good policy quite a mess and difficult to see the benefit of in the same way'

Recommendations

- The Children's Minister should remind all Directors of Children's Services about the new rule and make sure every area is offering at least £3,000.
- Local authorities that aren't offering at least £3,000 need to urgently update their policies to meet the national standard.

Clear rules and information

Care leavers reported to us that they were not always made aware of their rights and how the Setting Up Home Allowance worked.

'You wouldn't hide money, like say if you've got a savings uplift of an ISA, for your child. You wouldn't then hide that from your children and never tell them that they got the uplift and that they're entitled to it. You would never do that to your own child, so why? Why are we doing that to the children that we're supposed to be corporate parenting to in local authorities? It's not right, and it's not fair'

Not all local authorities who responded had a written policy about the Setting Up Home Allowance that they could share with ANV. Without clear information about rules and entitlements it is difficult for care leavers to challenge if they are not getting the support they are entitled to. It also makes it more difficult for workers who support them to let them know what the rules are.

I think it's really important [to have clear information] because I think if they're not receiving what they're entitled to, they should be in a position to be able to raise that and say why haven't I got that? ... all young care-experienced people should have been notified about this national change to their level of care... It's that lack of communication where that break breaks down, it just falls apart.

Recommendations

- The Department for Education should update the official guidelines (Statutory Guidance on [Transition to adulthood for care leavers](#)) to reflect the £3,000 minimum and work with care-experienced young people to make sure the rules are fair for everyone, no matter where they live.
- Local authorities should make all the details about the Setting Up Home Allowance easy to find and understand as part of their local offer for care leavers.

Increase choice, independence and support

Care leavers wanted a system where they are trusted to make their own choices over how their Setting Up Home Allowance is spent.

Allow us to decorate our houses to our taste. I want to feel like I have a home. I've spent years in rooms that aren't allowed to be personalised and feel like someone else's. Let me have my home.

Practice example: Local policy on E-wallet cards

Your Personal Adviser can help you get an E-Wallet card. Having the card means we can instantly transfer money to you and you will have more choice over how you purchase items (e.g. over the phone, in person, or online)

A prepaid card for all could be a positive step. That way, we have more ownership but there's still the ability to monitor - if monitoring can't be avoided.

Care leavers wanted simplified systems where the Personal Advisors who support them directly have the power and skills to help them make decisions and learn how to manage the money they receive.

PAs to be trained more with delivering life skill information.

And all money should be approved by the young person... This is the perfect opportunity to work with your young person and see what kind of spending habits they have, maybe, you know what I mean, just to start discussing how to use it in a more responsible way, but you can do that together.'

PAs should have more power of approval, so it doesn't take so long, if approval is still required.

Practice example: Local policy on supporting care leavers to spend their Setting Up Home Allowance

In most cases, the 11+ Service Personal Advisor or another person designated in their place (for example an ex-foster carer or a supported housing worker) should supervise the spending of any setting up home money. This is because it should be a learning exercise and the young person should be helped to achieve value for money, although this does not always mean buying the cheapest items... There are occasions when the young person's maturity is such that they may be able to spend the agreed money themselves. In these cases part payment can be released with the promise of the next payment when the young person returns with receipts for appropriate.

Recommendations

- Local authorities should review how they manage the Setting Up Home Allowance to make sure young people leaving care are supported and trusted to manage the money themselves. This will help them build independent living skills and choose what they need to make their new place feel like home.
- Local authorities should make sure the rules and entitlements for the Setting Up Home Allowance are easy to find by including them in the local offer for care leavers.
- Explore options such as pre-paid cards or a way of supporting young people leaving care to use the online so it's easier to get discounts and find ways to get good quality items they need more cheaply.

Increase resources and review regularly

Different local authorities have taken different approaches to who is entitled to the uplift. The most generous policies increased the allowance for all care leavers up to 25 years old. ANV would like to see this approach rolled out across the country.

Young people welcomed the increase in the Setting Up Home Allowance and those that had already received some or all of their allowance talked about how a bigger amount could help them.

It shouldn't just be the bare minimum we are given, the bare minimum does not feel like 'care', it just feels like a job and we're the burden.

The government needs to better fund local authorities, and ensure that local authorities are doing as they are required.

Young people stressed the importance of regularly reviewing systems

Review the support regularly, prices are constantly going up, the should be with it.

Practice example: Local policy developed with young people

This Local Offer has been developed in direct consultation with care experienced young people. Our offer and this document will be reviewed on an annual basis and the test of its success will be measured against what care experienced young people tell us and their direct experiences of services.

Recommendations

- The Department for Education should review and increase the Setting Up Home Allowance annually in line with inflation. They should also make sure funding for the Allowance includes all care leavers up to age 25.
- Local authorities should make sure every care leaver up to 25 gets the full £3,000 allowance to help them set up their home.
- As part of updating the support they offer care leavers, local authorities should regularly review the Setting Up Home Allowance with care leavers. This should include looking at:
 - ◇ The amount offered and what it can be used for.
 - ◇ Who can get the allowance, when, and how they can access it.
 - ◇ How the money is managed and how much choice young people have in using it.
 - ◇ Practical help with setting up a home, like moving belongings or getting tools.
 - ◇ Extra support, like funds, goods, or discounts from charities, housing providers and utility companies.



Appendix

Setting Up Home Allowance

The rules around the Setting Up Home Allowance are set out in statutory guidance. The guidance is created by the Department for Education to set out what local authorities must do to comply with the law. We have highlighted what the guidance says about the Setting Up Home Allowance below.

It can take time for Government to update guidance, so they also send out letters to clarify new rules and policy. The increase in the Setting Up Home Allowance was included in one such letter, with key information also pulled out below.

Section 31 Determination Letter for - Leaving Care Allowance Uplift Implementation (New Burdens) 2023/25 [31/6559]

Statutory guidance requires local authorities to provide a leaving care allowance, to enable care leavers to purchase essentials (such as furniture, white goods and carpets/curtains) when they move into their first home. DfE guidance currently recommends that local authorities should pay a minimum of £2,000. The independent review into children's social care recommended that the minimum amount should be increased. We are increasing the minimum recommended amount to £3,000 from April 2023.

Statutory Guidance will be updated to reflect the new minimum amount that DfE recommends local authorities should pay. This proposal was announced in the Government's response to the care review, published on 2 February. Children's social care stable homes built on love.

https://coramvoice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Section_31_grant_determination_letter_for_leaving_care_allowance_uplift_implementation_grant_2023_to_2025.pdf

The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations Volume 3: planning transition to adulthood for care leavers

Financial policies to support transition to adulthood (pp.78-79)

8.8. *The financial policy should set out how the local authority will support young people to enhance their life chances and make a successful transition to adulthood and demonstrate the priorities of the local authority for the young people for whom it acts as a corporate parent.*

8.9. *Priorities will need to include:*

- *Setting up home allowances (including the possibility of assistance with utility bills during the young person's first winter of independent living and decorating costs, both for private sector accommodation and local authority accommodation [where appropriate])*

Setting up home allowances (p.80)

8.17. *Making the transition to adulthood can be an extremely stressful process for a looked after child but one that can also be very rewarding and help young people to assert their identity, make life choices about how they furnish their own homes and thus improve their self-esteem and confidence. As such, local authority allocation of setting up home allowances will be crucial in helping young people establish their identity and independence and should be used to ensure that they have appropriate equipment and household items to set up safe, secure and stable accommodation.*

8.18. *Like other young people setting up their first home young people making the transition from care to independence are likely to need a substantial amount of support to ensure they maximise the allowances they get to set up a home.*

8.19. *We expect local authorities to consult with their Children in Care Council or appropriate consultative advisory group to set the level of the setting up home allowance and endorse a minimum standard for furnishings and equipment depending on the type of accommodation. A survey by the Care Leavers Foundation in 2011 showed that in order to buy the minimum amount of furnishings and equipment which would be needed, the allowance should be at least £2,000 and in many areas £3,000. All local authorities are, therefore, encouraged to aim for payments at*

these levels as a minimum and to review their payments annually. Local authorities should also ensure this entitlement is publicised so that their young people are fully aware of it.

Further information about good practice in providing financial support (p.103)

Appendix E - Setting up home allowances

E.1 It will be good practice that this allowance will generally be spent in stages; initially on semi-independent needs and subsequently, on independent accommodation needs. In addition, the allowance may need to be spent collaboratively, with the young person's PA, like a responsible parent, guiding the spending and assisting them to maximise and get value for money from their allowance. The allowance can be used to assist with the development of financial capability and budgeting skills.

E.2 Young people, foster carer/s, residential workers and where appropriate family members should be encouraged to set up a 'dowry' or 'bottom drawer' of items that can be saved and used when the young person sets up their home. Saving should be encouraged by responsible corporate parents and where young people have collected items for independent living they should not be penalised, and should remain entitled to their full allowance.

E.3 Each local authority should ensure they have a policy that sets out the level of the setting up home allowance, how it will be used and any conditions for its use reflecting local priorities.

E.4 The setting up home allowance policy should consider:

- *The provision of the first television license;*
- *The provision of the first household contents insurance premium;*
- *Ensuring any gas/electrical goods are installed by an approved fitter;*
- *Removal costs between semi-independent and independent accommodation;*
- *A decorating and practical assistance ensuring accommodation is furnished to a sufficient standard;*
- *Health and safety items such as a door chain, spare keys, carbon monoxide and smoke detectors (where not fitted), fire*

blankets and basic first aid equipment.

E.5 Local authorities may find it helpful to develop inventory sheets that set out the items the young person has purchased, the accumulated spend and any remaining allowance. These records would be helpful for young people, PAs and local authorities in terms of audit, and assessing how well the young person is managing their allowance.

E.6 Early planning regarding the use of the setting up home allowance will help to ensure that young people, carers and PAs can maximise its value.

E.7 Local authorities need to recognise that not all young people will be successful the first time they try to live independently, and that they may need this help more than once. Additionally, young people may have items damaged or lost through no fault of their own and may require assistance to replace essential items.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/61f81624d3bf7f78df30b359/CA1989_Transitions_Guidance.pdf

Care leaver local offer

Through the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Government introduced the requirement for local authorities to publish a 'Care Leaver Offer', which outlines the services for care leavers available within the local authority area. The guidance states:

Local offer guidance Guidance for local authorities (pp.6-7)

- *The local offer should include the support local authorities will provide across all of its departments/services (for example, Housing and Leisure Services), not just the support provided by the Children's Services Department.*
- *The local offer should include – and differentiate between - both care leavers' statutory entitlements (which all care leavers in England are entitled to) and other additional support that local authorities choose to provide to demonstrate their commitment to being the young person's 'corporate parent'.*
- *Where a partner organisation provides a discrete service for care leavers – such as*

a health drop-in exclusively for care leavers – and the local authority is confident that there is an ongoing commitment from the partner organisation to provide that service/support, it should be included as part of the local offer.

- *However, where a partner organisation is offering a service that is available to all young people, but there is no bespoke service for care leavers – such as a young people’s sexual health clinic, or a careers advice service for all 16-25 year olds – it may be more appropriate to signpost/provide a link to that service, rather than to include it as part of the local offer.*

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a93ec4aed915d57d4d0ef1a/Local_offer_guidance_final.pdf

Where care leavers live

The move into adulthood is not always straightforward. Most care leavers do not turn 18 and move into their own flat. National statistics tell us more about the many different places care leavers live.

17-21 year old care leaver accommodation

Location	Age				
	17	18	19	20	21
With parents or relatives	49%	11%	12%	11%	9%
Semi-independent,	3%	36%	24%	18%	13%
Supported lodgings		7%	6%	4%	3%
No fixed abode/homeless			1%	1%	1%
Foyers		4%	3%	2%	2%
Independent living	2%	9%	25%	37%	46%
Emergency			1%	1%	1%
In custody	6%	2%	3%	3%	4%
With former foster carers	0%	18%	12%	8%	6%
Community home		4%	3%	3%	3%
Other accommodation	33%	5%	5%	5%	9%
Total information not	4%	3%	3%	3%	3%

Source: '17-21 year old care leaver accommodation - NATIONAL' from ['Children looked after in England including adoptions', Permanent data table – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](#)

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