



Luton

Luton Council

Children Families and Education

Leaving Care Financial Policy and Guidance 2022

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INTRODUCTION

This guide explains what support you will receive from Luton Council if you are aged 16 to 21 (or up to 25 if still in education or disabled or you ask for continued support), and you are looked after or receiving leaving care services from us. Your Personal Advisor (PA) can explain and give you more information and discuss any areas in further detail if you need.

The types of financial support you can access includes:

- Money to 'live on', where appropriate, especially if you have pending asylum claims
- Emergency cover whilst waiting for your benefits to come through
- Accommodation costs, if appropriate, and financial support to set up your home
- Support to enable you to engage in education and training, including the High Education Allowance and Bursaries
- Help to promote contact with your family

Luton Council will help you towards independence and support you to achieve your full potential, through education, training and employment.

In addition to the support you can access (as noted above) in some cases, Luton Council provide financial support too but only where:

- There is an assessed need
- The request is reasonable and our resources allow

As the Council has limits to how we can provide additional financial resources to you, it is really important for you to meet with your Social Worker (SW) or Personal Advisor (PA) and share your views in your Pathway Plan about what support you need. Then we can help you plan for the future.

Where we are unable to financially support you, we will provide clear information as to the reasons why the decision has been made.

Some of the financial support you are entitled to varies depending on your circumstances, therefore your entitlement should be confirmed to you before you make plans to spend the money. You may also be able to have other financial support but this is discretionary and is dependent on your individual circumstances. If you wish to claim a discretionary payment you should discuss your needs with your Personal Advisor.

We will take into account a number of factors when deciding on the level of financial support you will receive. These factors can include your age, your financial position, the reason for your request, and how the decision will affect you.

Eligibility

The level of support you will receive from the Council is dependent upon which category you fit into as defined in the Children Act 1989, and as amended by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. The categories are:

Eligible child	If you are 16 or 17 and still in care then you are what is called an 'eligible child'. If you are an eligible child you will have a Pathway Plan when you are 16 saying how Luton will help you get ready for leaving care and adulthood.
Relevant child	If you are 16 or 17 and leaving care then you were an 'eligible child' and have now become what is called a 'relevant child'. If you are a relevant child, Luton must provide you with a Pathway Plan, which covers support around a suitable place to live and enough money to live on.
Former relevant child	<p>Luton must continue to provide you with housing and living (subsistence) allowances until you are 18 and become a 'former relevant child' (usually referred to as a care leaver). Luton must maintain regular contact with you, help you with your Pathway Plan and help you achieve your personal goals.</p> <p>The Pathway Plan will be reviewed at least every six months and more often if necessary. A Personal Advisor will be appointed to help you, if you don't already have one. You will receive support until you are 21, or longer (this can be up until you reach 25) if you are still in education or training or you ask for continued support.</p>
Qualifying	Young people who are aged 16-21 and were looked after on or after their 16th birthday and are now no longer looked after, but had spent less than 13 weeks being looked after since the age of 14. You can remain a qualifying young person when aged 21-24 if you continue on an education or training course.

If you are unsure which category you come under, please ask your Social Worker or Personal Advisor to explain.

LEGAL DUTIES AND POWERS

There are certain duties and powers Luton Council owe to you, our young people and these are applicable to both 'those leaving care and between the ages of 16-25' and 'those who have left care but are under 25 and want to return for support following changes introduced in the Children and Social Work Act 2017'.

In either case you are responsible for their own basic maintenance (from employment, state benefits, student loans, grants and bursaries). However, Luton has a duty to provide assistance through an allocated Social Worker or Personal Advisor to support you with areas such as housing, education, training, health and finances. The support is based on assessed needs and is there to help you realise your aspirations

The statutory responsibilities for the Leaving Care Service are set out in the:

- Children Act 1989
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017, which made additional provisions for care leavers, and outlined in law for the first time what it means for a local authority to be a good corporate parent.

Luton Council have responsibilities towards care leavers until they are 21, or 25 if they are still in education or training, have a disability or if the care leaver requests continued support.

Luton’s 18+ Care Leavers Team is committed to achieving five key outcomes for you:

1. Better preparation and support to live independently
2. Improved access to education, employment and training
3. Stability, and to feel safe and secure
4. Improved access to health support
5. Financial stability

LEAVING FOSTER CARE OR LOCAL AUTHORITY CARE

Luton council must provide you with support until you’re 25. When you leave care there’ll be a meeting to help you work out what you’re going to do next.

Age’s	What happens
16-17	You’ll be given a plan to help you make the transition from care to independent life
18-20	You’re no longer in care when you turn 18 but Luton will still provide you with some support, including a Personal Adviser (PA) and plan
21-25	You can continue to get help and advice from Luton and your Personal Advisor until you’re 25, if you want to.

What the Council will do

We will:

- Give you a Personal Advisor who stays in touch with you once you've left care
- Carry out an assessment to find out what advice and support you need. We will also prepare a plan to make this happen (called a 'pathway plan')
- Make sure you've got somewhere to live and enough money (until you turn 18)
- Help you to continue living with your foster parent if you want to (until you turn 21)

We will also write a 'pathway plan' when you reach 16 years old which helps you prepare for leaving care and says what support you should get. This pathway plan will include plans for your health; education, training and development; contact with family; and financial management

Your Personal Advisor will take part in any pathway plan reviews until you're 21 years old or 25 years old if you want this support to continue. You will have a review:

- at least every 6 months
- if you ask for one

Your Personal Advisor can bring forward the timing of the review of your plan, if there is an assessed risk that a crisis may develop in a young person's life.

SUPPORT FOR 16 AND 17 YEAR OLDS

For most young people aged 16 and 17, Luton Council will pay for your accommodation, give you a Living Allowance and support you financially with a range of needs including education, training or employment.

Luton will pay a Living Allowance into your bank account at a rate equivalent to Income Support (IS) or Universal Credit depending on where you live. Check with your Social Worker or Personal Advisor for the current amount.

If you have to pay a service charge out of this to your accommodation provider, the amount should be stated in your Pathway Plan. If you do not have a bank or building society account, please talk to your Personal Advisor about setting one up.

If you find it difficult to manage your money, we will offer budgeting advice. If you often run out of money, we may give you smaller, more frequent sums of cash or go to the shops with you instead of paying your Living Allowance directly into your bank or building society account.

If you are on a training course where a weekly allowance is paid directly to you, we will not pay the Living Allowance. However, if the weekly payment is less than Living Allowance we will pay the difference.

If you are a 16 or 17 year old parent, you will probably claim benefits from the DWP and tax credits from HM Revenues & Customs for your family's living costs, but we will continue to pay for your housing until your 18th birthday. You can still ask Luton Council to help you with the costs associated with education, training and employment. Please talk to your Personal Advisor about the benefits and tax credits you can claim.

National Insurance number

If you are aged 16 or over and you do not have a National Insurance number, please talk to your Personal Advisor about how you can get one before your 18th birthday. It will be very difficult to get a job or welfare benefits without a National Insurance number.

If you came to the UK as an unaccompanied asylum seeking child, then you may not be able to get a National Insurance number due to your immigration status. This is something that is controlled by the Department for Work and Pensions and not Children's Services.

Discretionary Payments

All payments above the Living Allowance and housing costs paid by Luton Council are discretionary and not an entitlement. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 sets out the priority areas for discretionary funding above the Living Allowance.

The priority areas are:

- Education materials and special equipment
- Costs associated with needs (such as a disability)
- The costs of childcare
- Clothing
- Contact with family or other significant relationships
- Cultural and religious needs
- Counselling and therapeutic needs

It is important to talk to your Personal Advisor about any needs or plans you have and make sure that your Pathway Plan records any requests or agreed funding.

Discretionary payments must be agreed by a Manager. All such payments will be monitored and reviewed to ensure no individual or group is unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged by the administration of discretionary payments.

Birthdays

On your 17th and 18th birthdays, if you live in semi-independent accommodation, Luton Council will give you **£30** for your 17th birthday and **£50** for your 18th birthday as part of an allowance to celebrate the occasion.

Religious Celebrations

For 17 and 18 year olds in semi-independent accommodation whatever your religion, faith or belief, we will give you a cash payment of **£50** once a year to contribute towards any celebration you may wish to make.

SAVINGS

All children looked after continuously for more than 12 months will have either a **Child Trust Fund (CTF)** (if born between 1 September 2002 and 2 January 2011) or a **Junior ISA** administered by an independent organisation (the **Share Foundation**) on our behalf. These are government-backed accounts which are opened with an initial payment from the government of **£200**. You cannot remove the money from these accounts until you are aged 18.

As you approach 18 years old you are given the opportunity to continue with your 'Junior ISA' investment or to access your funds direct. Your Personal Advisor will discuss how to access money that we have saved for you via long-term savings and the governments Shared Foundation whilst you were in care.

SUPPORT IN EDUCATION

16-19 Bursary

If you remain in education and you are at college or with a recognised training programme you are entitled to the 16-19 Vulnerable Persons Bursary. This is provided by your college/ trainer and depends on which college you go to.

To be paid the bursary you must have a bank account and a letter from your Personal Advisor to state you are a care leaver.

The bursary is to cover all your normal education needs such as:

- clothing, books and other equipment for your course
- transport and lunch on days you study or train

The Vulnerable Persons Bursary (up to **£1,200**) is dependent on your circumstances and benefits.

The college or education establishment may also be able to offer a discretionary payment from the '**Learning Support Fund**', which will help you with the cost of equipment needed for your course.

Note: If you are 19 years old or over but started the course aged 16-18 you could also get a discretionary bursary if you are continuing the course or have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Further guidance on the 16-19 Bursary can be found on the Government website:
<https://www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund>

Higher Education Bursary

Should you decide that you would like to further your education and attend university this should be discussed with your Personal Advisor and recorded in your Pathway Plan.

All care leavers in higher education are entitled to the 'Higher Education Bursary', which is **£2,000** over the duration of the degree. The payment is split up and paid to you at the end of each academic term.

Support for Accommodation during Holidays

The 18+ Care Leavers team provides financial support while you are at University. Luton's financial responsibility to you is to ensure you have accommodation over the holiday periods.

The 18+ team provides care leaver's with **£100** per week for the duration of your degree, this is to cover all your education and rent cost which must include all the holiday periods. To provide this allowance we need to see confirmation you have:

- applied for student finance
- enrolled at your chosen university
- a signed consent form so we can contact the university.
- after you have completed your first year at university, we will need to see your exam results each year.

If you decide to go to a local university and are in a staying put placement please see our '**Staying Put Arrangement Policy**' for further details.

If you are a university student who is a single parent or have registered disabilities you can access the benefit system for your rent and other benefits, therefore we would not support you with the **£100** weekly allowance. However, you may be entitled to a reduced contribution for education costs subject to assessment by your Personal

Advisor. Your Personal Advisor will take into consideration your income and expenditure in order to determine any shortfalls that may arise. Any such payments are discretionary on a case by case basis and you should speak to your Personal Advisor if you need further information or assistance.

The 18+ Care Leavers team will usually only support 1 degree course, any additional requests for further education will need to be taken on a case-by-case basis to the Luton Care Management Resource Panel (CMRP) to be agreed.

The level of fees, loans, grants, and bursaries for higher education student's change each academic year. The most accurate and up to date information is available via the UCAS website: <https://www.ucas.com/finance/undergraduate-tuition-fees-and-student-loans>.

Student Finances

Student finance is made up of a number of components, which are detailed as follows.

Tuition Fees and Tuition Fee Loans

Your loan amount depends on your university and course, where you're living, your income and whether you are in full or part time higher education.

The tuition fee loan is provided by Student Finance England and is paid directly to the university to cover the full cost of the course.

If you are in full time higher education, you might also be eligible for other financial support subject to an assessment of your needs via the government or the university.

This can include:

- Disabled Students' Allowances - If you have a learning difficulty, health problem or disability
- Dependents grant - If children or an adult depends on you financially
- Childcare grant or parent learning allowance - If you have a child

To qualify for a tuition fee loan on a part-time course the part-time course needs to be at least 25% of an equivalent full-time course each year (e.g. four years instead of one year full time).

Maintenance Loans

The maintenance loan is provided by Student Finance England and is normally paid in three instalments directly to you. It is provided to help with living costs such as rent, food, bills, equipment and books.

How much you can get depends on when you started your course, where you live, and your income.

Bursaries

There are a number of bursaries available from a number of universities for young people who are care leavers. Our Virtual School Educational Personal Advisors can help you apply for bursaries as some universities offer their own financial packages for care leavers. Our Virtual School Personal Advisors can also help you to apply for Hardship funding if this is offered by the university for students in very difficult situations.

There is a page on the 'Become' charity website (<https://www.becomecharity.org.uk/> or <https://propel.org.uk/UK/>), which details the support available, from all the universities/ colleges in the UK, for care leavers studying at a higher education level. Please ask your Personal Advisor for more details around financial support when considering or attending higher education.

Post Graduate Education

Funding for postgraduate study may be available via the universities - there are a range of funding options if you are thinking of doing a master's or doctorate. The Virtual School Personal Advisor and/ or your Personal Advisor can help you make appropriate enquiries about this.

Disabled Students Allowances may also be available for postgraduate study. Contact the university you wish to attend for further advice or the Virtual School Personal Advisor can help you make appropriate enquiries with the university you wish to attend.

Childcare Costs while Studying or Training

If you are a parent of a young child, and you are on a college or training course, you will probably be eligible for the **Care to Learn Scheme**. To get Care to Learn, you must be under 20 years old on the day your course begins, and if so the government will contribute towards your childcare costs until your course has finished.

The scheme is available for publicly-funded courses in England. This includes courses in schools, sixth-forms in schools, sixth-form colleges, other colleges and learning providers, including Foundation Learning, and your community at Children's Centres.

Care to Learn will pay up to **£160** per child per week if you live outside London (**£175** if you live in London). This money covers costs for:

- Your childcare, including deposit and registration fees (you will need to use an Ofsted registered childcare provider)

- A childcare taster session for up to 5 days
- Keeping your childcare place over the summer holidays
- Taking your child to their childcare provider

You should apply for Care to Learn before the course begins and your Personal Advisor will help you with this.

If you are over 20 when your course begins, you could get help with your child care costs from the Sixth Form College Childcare Scheme or from your college's Discretionary Learner Support Fund if they have one.

If you cannot get help with child care costs from anywhere else, you can ask Luton Council to help you. You should talk to your Personal Advisor about this before you begin any course and ensure that this is recorded in your Pathway Plan. To encourage you to participate in education and training, Luton Council will always try to meet reasonable costs.

SUPPORT IN HOUSING AND ACCOMMODATION

There is a range of accommodation available to care leavers. Each type has different levels of support and we hope that you can be offered accommodation that best suits your needs and have some choice in the type you move into.

In deciding your accommodation needs, your background and wishes will be taken into consideration. We will provide you with support and prepare you for living independently, as we hope that later on you will be ready to move into your own housing.

Until your 18th birthday, your housing will have been paid by Luton Council. However, from your 18th birthday almost all young people become responsible for paying their own rent. (If your immigration status prevents you from working or claiming Housing Benefit, we may agree to continue paying your rent).

If you are receiving Income Support or Universal Credit, or if you are working on a low income, you can claim Housing Benefit from the local authority where you live.

You should also ask your Personal Advisor whether you will be responsible for Council Tax and whether you need to apply for Council Tax Benefit or Council Tax exemption. If you know what your address will be on your 18th birthday, you can claim Housing Benefit up to 13 weeks before your 18th birthday.

After your 18th birthday, the Council has no duty to house you (except for providing and/or funding vacation accommodation if you are at university or in residential further education).

Housing is not free. You must be aware of how much your rent is and make sure that you get Housing Benefit to pay your rent. Your Personal Advisor can help with any claims you need to make and you should speak to them before signing up to any agreements.

Paying your Rent if you are Working

If you are working, you will need to pay all or some of your rent, depending on how much you earn. If you do not earn much money, your Personal Advisor can help you to apply for Housing Benefit to help with your rent. If you find you are having problems paying your rent, you must talk to your Personal Advisor as soon as possible to agree on a plan to help you stay in your home.

Leaving Care Grant

If we are satisfied that you are ready to move into independent housing, and you are moving into a new home which is unfurnished or only partly furnished, we will give you a Leaving Care Grant to help you buy essential things when moving into your own home.

This is a discretionary grant of up to **£2000**, which is available for you to spend with the support of your Personal Advisor in order to buy things like:

- Household equipment
- Purchase a home health and safety pack such as smoke detectors and a carbon monoxide detector
- Pay for your first TV licence of **£150.50**
- Furnish your new home

Should you move to a hostel, private rented accommodation, semi-supported accommodation, or you start university you can access your grant to buy the basic equipment/ furnishings that you require.

Private Rented Housing

We help young people to find somewhere suitable to live. We prefer to help you find housing through the local authority, or from a housing association. However, in exceptional circumstances or if there is no other funding available the Council may consider helping you to get privately rented housing.

Your Personal Advisor would need to get agreement from a manager before we can advance you any money to pay a landlord or letting agency for a deposit and/ or rent in advance. Any money we advance to you for this purpose would be deducted from your Leaving Care Grant and would be written into your Pathway Plan.

Council Tax Relief

Luton Council recognises that young people's transition out of care and into adulthood is extremely difficult. Managing your money for the first time, without support from family, leaves some care leavers at real risk of falling into debt. Therefore, the Council has decided to support those council tax charge payers leaving its care by reducing their net liability for council tax.

If you are aged between 18 and 25 years old you may be entitled to receive some help with your Council Tax bill. Depending on the number of adults residing in your property this could be up to 100%. You should speak to your Personal Advisor and include any such needs in your Pathway Plan

Prison or a Young Offenders' Institution

If you are in prison or a Young Offenders' Institution (YOI), your welfare benefits will stop. We can give you up to **£20** per month to help you buy toiletries and phone cards etc. We will pay you by postal order to the Governor with your name on the reverse. We will visit you regularly and help you plan ahead for leaving prison or the YOI. While you are in custody, we can help you to safely store your belongings. However, we cannot be held liable for any loss or damage to your belongings.

Staying Put Placements

Luton has a '**Staying Put Scheme**' in place should both you and your foster carer agree to extend the placement after your 18th Birthday. In this case your placement will convert to a Staying Put Placement up to the age of 21. Both you and your carers need to be in agreement for such a placement and this will be subject to an assessment.

These plans must be made in good time to ensure careful planning is in place. Your Personal Advisor will support you and your carer through this but the main change that affects you is that you can claim benefits in your own right at 18 (Universal Credit). You will need to claim Housing Benefit if you're not working or if you're on a low income, which will be paid direct to your carer. If you're working you may be expected to pay rent to your carer at the benefit rate.

You will also be supported with '**independence training**' so you are ready to eventually live independently. The "**Luton Transition to Adulthood – Preparation for**

Independence” booklet is a useful tool that can be used in helping you to develop those skills.

SUPPORT IN EMPLOYMENT AND LIVING INDEPENDENTLY

The financial support you received up to the age of 18 is different to that which you get once you turn 18. Previously you will have been supported by Luton’s 0-17 Looked After Children’s teams, however as you turn 18 your support moves over to the 18+ Care Leavers team where you are assigned a Personal Advisor who will support you through any changes that occur including applying to access the benefits you are entitled to from your 18th birthday.

Government Support and Benefits

After your 18th birthday, Luton will continue to encourage and support you to become more independent. As we will no longer be able to pay you a Living Allowance you will need to talk with your Personal Advisor about the welfare benefits you will need to claim from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and the documents you need to support your benefit claims.

Care Leavers aged 18 and over and not employed, will be expected to apply for **Universal Credit** depending on where you live.

Alternatively, to be eligible for **Income Support (IS)**, you need to be studying for 12 hours or more per week, or be a lone parent, or be able to provide medical certificates from your GP confirming that you are too sick to work.

You will need a **National Insurance (NI) number** to claim welfare benefits. If you do not have a National Insurance number, please ask your Personal Advisor to help you apply for one as soon as possible.

Whilst you’re waiting for your first benefits payment, you may be able to get some emergency money from the benefits agency to help you cover household expenses, like food and bills. This is called a **‘Hardship Payment’** or **‘Advance Payment’**. You can request this through the government Universal Credit scheme and can be done so online (www.gov.uk/sign-in-universal-credit).

A Hardship or Advanced Payment is usually a loan so you will have to pay this back and a payment plan can be set up for you to pay this back in manageable amounts. Your Personal Advisor can support you with making claims for this.

Support from the Council

For a period of up to the first 4 weeks of your claim or until your employment income comes through, the 18+ Care Leavers team will support you financially with the equivalent amount you would get from the benefits agency until you get your Hardship Payment and this will be paid weekly. You will of course need to ensure you have provided evidence that you have made a benefits claim or are working.

Aged 18 to 21

If you are not in education employment or training (NEET) then some of the support you can access will be different. You can access benefits, however if you claim universal credit you will be put into a programme of intensive support known as the '**Youth Obligation Support Programme**', which aims to encourage and support all young people into employment, work-related training or an apprenticeship.

You will only be able to access benefits for up to 6 months and if you are still NEET you will be required to attend a work placement or training to carry on accessing your benefits. You might also be able to claim income support or jobseekers' allowance and should speak to your Personal Advisor about further support and guidance.

Emergency Payments

If you urgently need money for basic living costs you should talk to your Personal Advisor. If your benefits have stopped, your Personal Advisor will help you to resolve any problems. If it takes time to resolve problems with Universal Credit, your Personal Advisor may, with the approval of their manager, be able to secure money for basic living costs for a short period of time.

If you urgently need money for a different reason, for example your money has been stolen or lost, or your belongings have been damaged in an accident, your Personal Advisor may, under exceptional circumstances and with their manager's approval, be able to secure a small amount of money to help you cope. Luton Council will refer you to local charities such as Luton Foodbank if required to help during emergencies.

SUPPORT FOR FORMER UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING YOUNG PEOPLE

Luton Council recognises that we have a duty to provide equal opportunities to young people who have come to the United Kingdom from other countries, as far as legislation permits us. Where legislation makes it difficult for us to provide financial support, for example due to your immigration status, the Council will always look for alternative ways to try to act fairly.

If you came to the UK as an unaccompanied asylum seeking child, and have an asylum claim that is still ongoing, then this may affect your entitlement to benefits and financial support, even once you are over 18. Many young people are not able to access benefits even when they are 18 and will instead receive money from the Council until their asylum case is determined.

When you turn 18, there is less financial support available as you are no longer considered to be a child. You can talk to your Personal Advisor about what financial support you can get but be prepared that it may be less than you have been used to as a child under 18.

If you are an unaccompanied asylum seeking child who has been granted leave to remain only until you are 17½ or 18 years old, you should ask your legal representative if you can apply for further leave to remain before your original period of leave expires. You will only be able to claim welfare benefits after your 18th birthday if you have made an application for further leave to remain before your original period of leave to remain has expired.

If you have exhausted all your immigration appeal rights and you are unlawfully present in the United Kingdom, you will not be able to claim welfare benefits after your 18th birthday. It may become unlawful for the Council to continue supporting you financially after your 18th birthday. Therefore, we must carry out an assessment to decide whether it is lawful to continue to give you a Living Allowance and pay for your housing, as well as additional financial support.

If your support with the Council ends while you are still waiting for the outcome of your asylum claim then you will be referred to another service such as Refugee Council and National Asylum Support Service (NASS) or Migrant Help who can support you to apply for accommodation and financial assistance.

CONTACT WITH FAMILY OR OTHER SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS

We will support you to maintain contact with people who are important to you. For young people who have significant relationships with family and friends in the United Kingdom, we may give you a travel card/ allowance for you to visit loved ones. We will also consider other requests. We will ask to speak with the person you want to visit before we give you the travel card/ allowance. Your Personal Advisor will need to talk to the Team Manager about your request.

For 16 to 18 year olds who are not from the United Kingdom and who have family and friends in other countries we can give you **£10** per month to purchase telephone credit to telephone them.

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

You can apply for **Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs)** to cover some of the extra costs you have because of a mental health problem, long term illness or any other disability. You can get the allowances on top of your other student finance and you will not need to repay this allowance.

If you're a part-time student your 'course intensity' can affect how much you get and in any case how much you get depends on your individual needs not your household income. For the 2019 to 2020 academic year this allowance is as follows:

Type of student	Specialist equipment allowance	Non-medical helper allowance	General allowance
Full-time	Up to £5,684 for the whole course	Up to £22,603 a year	Up to £1,899 a year
Part-time	Up to £5,684 for the whole course	Up to £16,951 a year	Up to £1,424 a year

Postgraduate students can get a single allowance of up to **£20,000** a year and it is worth noting these figures are the maximum amounts - most students get less.

The 'Disabled Students' Allowance' is a grant to help meet the extra course costs students can face as a direct result of a disability, mental health condition or specific learning difficulty. They are aimed at helping disabled students to study on an equal basis with other students.

The Allowance can help with:

- Specialist equipment, for example a computer if you need one because of your disability (You'll need to pay the first **£200**, which is the minimum cost that any student is likely to incur when buying a computer).
- Non-medical helpers
- Extra travel because of your disability
- Other disability-related costs of studying

The money is paid either into your bank account or directly to the organisation providing the service or equipment. You can apply for the Allowance if you live in England and have a disability that affects your ability to study, such as a:

- Learning difficulty, for example dyslexia or ADHD
- Mental health condition like anxiety or depression
- Physical disability, for example if you're partially sighted or have to use crutches
- Long-term health condition such as cancer, chronic heart disease or HIV

You must also:

- Be an undergraduate or postgraduate student (including Open University or distance learning)
- Qualify for student finance from Student Finance England
- Be studying on a course that lasts at least a year

You cannot get the Allowance from Student Finance England if you're:

- An EU student
- Eligible for NHS Disabled Students' Allowances (this is a separate scheme)
- Getting equivalent support from another funding source, like from your university or a social work bursary

Luton Council will help you get services for any physical or mental health needs you may have. For example, we may pay for your travel costs to appointments and we may accompany you if you wish. Please talk to your Personal Advisor and make sure any request for help is recorded in your Pathway Plan.

Most 16 and 17 year olds are eligible for free health services. If you are not automatically entitled to free health services, you should complete an **HC1** form. The HC1 takes about a month to be processed and then you will receive a **HC2 certificate** giving you free or very low cost health services. The HC2 has to be renewed every six months. Additional payments will be considered by your Personal Advisor for necessary health needs.

MATERNITY GRANT

If you are expecting your first baby or you are having a multiple birth, and you or your partner are in receipt of other benefits (e.g. Income Support or Universal Credit), you can apply for a one-off '**Sure Start Maternity Grant**'. You must claim the grant within 11 weeks of the baby's due date or within 6 months after the baby's birth. You do not have to pay the grant back and it will not affect your other benefits or tax credits.

If you already have children under 16

You can only get a grant if either:

- You're expecting a multiple birth (such as twins)
- The child you're caring for is someone else's

This is broken down as follows:

Children under 16	Grant if you have twins	Grant if you have triplets
You have 1 or more (and none of them are from multiple births)	£500	£1,000
You've already had twins	£0	£500
You've already had triplets	£0	£0

If you're not giving birth

You may also be able to get a grant if you're adopting or becoming a surrogate parent.

The baby must be less than 1 year old on the date you claim. You must be receiving one of the eligible benefits and one of the following must also apply:

- you've become responsible for the baby and you're not the mother
- the baby has been placed with you for adoption
- you've got permission to adopt a baby from abroad
- you've got a parental order for a surrogate birth
- you've been appointed as guardian
- you've an adoption or a residence order

KEY DOCUMENTS AND PASSPORTS

Most young people will already have a passport by the age of 18 but if you do have one the Council will purchase a passport and one birth certificate. You should discuss with your Personal Advisor how this can be arranged for you.

If you are an asylum seeker or if you only have Discretionary Leave to Remain in the United Kingdom then you cannot get funding for a passport or travel document. If you are granted Refugee Status or Humanitarian Protection, then we may be able to assist, please ask your Personal Advisor about how to pay for your application for a passport or travel document.

PROVISIONAL DRIVING LICENCE, DRIVING LESSONS, DRIVING TEST OR CYCLING

If you are aged between 18- 24 year olds and in education, training or employment then Luton Council will provide the funding for the following under '**Introduction to Driving**':

- a provisional driving license
- one theory test
- the cost of 10 (which the young person is expected to match much match that of the cost sourced by the 18+ Care leavers team)
- one practical driving test

This will enable the young person to have up to 20 lessons part paid by the Council.

Depending on an assessment of need, the 'Introduction to Driving' equivalent funding can be transferred to a 'certificate' in either: basic training, forklift truck driving course motor cycle or Scooter lessons.

Speak to your Social Worker or Personal Advisor about other avenues you can explore, such as charities which support care leavers and may be able to help with costs such as driving or cycling lessons.

SUPPORT AFTER YOU TURN 21 OR 25 YEARS OLD

Turning 21 Years Old

From your 20th birthday onwards, your Personal Advisor will speak to you about what will happen after your 21st birthday.

After you turn 21, our duties towards you under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 will usually end unless you are still doing a course of education or training which has been agreed in your Pathway Plan. However, under the Children and Social Work Act 2017 we still have a duty to support you if you ask us to. Your Personal Advisor will discuss with you whether you wish to continue to receive support beyond age 21.

Under the Children and Social Work Act 2017, where you indicate to your Personal Advisor that you wish to continue with your Personal Advisor support, your Pathway Plan will be reviewed and updated to reflect your current needs. Your Personal Advisor support will continue to be provided for as long as it is requested, or until you reach 25 years old

Luton Council will have given you a lot of support and encouragement for the first three years of your adult life from 18 to 21 years old. Once you reach 21, we will expect most young people to be able to live and support themselves independently. However, if you still have support needs, for example you have a physical or learning disability, substance misuse or mental health problems or you would like continued Personal Advisor support, **we will continue to help you**. Please make sure you speak to your Personal Advisor and that your needs are recorded in your Pathway Plan.

Turning 25 Years Old

From your 24th birthday onwards your Personal Advisor will speak to you about what will happen next. *After you turn 25, our duties towards you under the Children and Social Work Act 2017 will end.* If you are concerned or would like to know more about what happens you can speak to your Personal Advisor and they can support you to access universal services, if necessary.

Keeping in touch offer

COMPLAINTS

If you are unhappy with the financial support or service you have been by Luton, please contact your Personal Advisor in the first instance and if it can't be resolved then this can be escalated to the 18+ Care Leavers Team Manager.

The Council has a clear complaints policy in dealing with any complaint or compliment received and all feedback will be considered carefully. If your complaint is not resolved or you feel you need further support, you can also make a complaint through the Children's Rights Advocacy Service via www.nyas.net.

APPENDIX A: BREAKDOWN OF KEY FINANCIAL SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO CARE LEAVERS

Support from the Council:		
Type	Amount	Detail
Living Allowance (Hardship Payment)	Up to £61.05 per week depending the assessed needs	<p>The Council may provide up to 4 weeks Living Allowance payments to assist young people whilst they wait for their initial Universal Credit or employment income.</p> <p>Young people must sign the 'Agreement to Share Information Form' so that personal advisors can liaise with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) regarding the progress of their claim. If a young person has not complied with the requirements of the DWP the Living Allowance payment will be reduced or food parcels will be provided.</p> <p>See: Support for 16 and 17 Year Olds Section</p>
Leaving Care Grant (Setting up Home Allowance)	Up to £2,000	<p>To furnish your accommodation.</p> <p>See: Leaving Care Grant in the Support in Housing and Accommodation Section</p>

Support from the Council:		
Type	Amount	Detail
Care Leavers including Asylum Seeking Young People not entitled to claim benefits	Up to £60.05	<p>Care Leavers with No Recourse to Public Funds will receive the Weekly Living Allowance OF £60.05 until the first of these events occur:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● You obtain Leave to Remain (LTR) / recourse to public Funds – you will be expected to claim universal credit or take up a job to provide for yourself ● You are Appeal Rights Exhausted (ARE) and referred to the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) ● You fail to comply with a removal order ● You reach the age of 21 and are referred to NASS <p>The Leaving Care Service will arrange to pay for the accommodation costs of Care Leavers with No Recourse to Public Funds until the first of these events occur:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● You obtain Leave to Remain (LTR) / recourse to public Funds ● You are Appeal Rights Exhausted (ARE) and referred to NASS / Migrant Help ● You fail to comply with a removal order ● You reach the age of 21 and are referred to NASS/ Migrant Help

Support from the Council:		
Type	Amount	Detail
Additional Weekly Living Allowances for young people not entitled to claim benefits	Varies	<p>We will refer care leavers aged up to 25 to our Immigration Team within the Family Partnership Team if you have children whilst you are awaiting benefits or if you are not entitled to claim benefits. Based on assessment, the Team consider financial support payments to you to support for a duration determined by the outcome of the assessment.</p> <p>The following additional weekly payments can be made if you</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £40.85 plus £5 per child under the age of 1. • £40.85 plus £3 per child aged between 1 and 3 years. • £40.85 plus £3 per child aged over 3
Asylum Seeking Young People progressing to University or higher education	Varies	<p>Young people should only be supported to progress to university/higher education if they have a form of status that gives them access to 'Home Student Status and Fees' and Student England Finances and have a positive status that continues until the course is completed. All support from Children's Services and any other source should be clearly set out in the Pathway Plan. Where young people do not have a status that gives them access to the above forms of financial support, personal advisers will support young people to apply for scholarships, grants and bursaries from voluntary organisations. This allowance is provided for up to 5 weeks after the young person has attained the age of 18 (whilst Universal Credit is claimed). The allowance can be paid via BACS, a card payment or in vouchers, depending on an assessment of need and the requirements and circumstances of the individual young person.</p>
16-19 Bursary	£1,200 each academic year	<p>If you are aged 16-19 and in education you should receive this bursary from your college. Your Personal Advisor can assist you in applying and this should be recorded in your Pathway Plan.</p> <p>See: 16-19 Bursary in the Support in Education Section</p>

Support from the Council:		
Type	Amount	Detail
Higher Education Bursary	£2,000 usually paid in instalments	If you choose to go into higher education (i.e. University), you're entitled to this bursary which is paid over the duration of your course. See: Higher Education Bursary in the Support in Education Section
Vacation accommodation for higher education	Varies	<p>You should either get somewhere to live or help paying your rent.</p> <p>Staying Put: Young people who remain in previous foster care placements will be supported via Housing Benefit/ Universal Credit and their own contributions, and may include a contribution from the Council. See: Staying Put Placements in the Support in Housing and Accommodation Section</p> <p>Semi-Independent: Accommodation costs for young people over age of 18 will only be provided in exceptional circumstances (e.g. their welfare may be jeopardised if no accommodation was arranged). Therefore, post-18 placements (i.e. Semi-independent) for exceptionally vulnerable young people may be funded in part or full following an assessment of need. See: Support in Housing and Accommodation Section</p> <p>Private Rented: Luton Council can pay one month's rent in advance and the deposit subject to assessment and application to the Council's Housing department for the initial deposit. It is your responsibility to ensure you do not damage the property and that you get the deposit back to use again if needed. However if damages are made to your property, you are responsible for the repair costs. See: Private Rented Housing in the Support in Housing and Accommodation Section</p>

Support from the Council:		
Type	Amount	Detail
Assistance with costs for education, employment and training	Varies	<p>Based on assessment of needs , Care leavers in need for additional funding to purchase course books or materials should submit a list of requirements to their social worker or leaving care personal adviser for approval.</p> <p><u>See: Support in Education Section, and Support in Employment and Living Independently Section</u></p>
Discretionary payments	Varies	<p>The Leaving Care Service may be able to provide one off payments in extenuating circumstances, e.g. there are concerns about your immediate safety or well-being.</p> <p>Such payments are likely to be made “in kind” (e.g. Bus or train fares , phone top up or reasonably priced phone to make and receive calls) than in cash.</p> <p>The Leaving Care Service may be able to assist with expenses linked with accessing and remaining in education, employment or training (e.g. the cost of a suit for an interview, bus fare whilst waiting for college bursary to come through).</p> <p>Based on assessment of needs, Leaving Care Service can support you financially to buy clothes, especially if you are entitled to claim benefits or your asylum seeker waiting for decision on your asylum application.</p> <p><u>See: Emergency Payments in the Support in Employment and Living Independently Section</u></p>

Support from the Council:		
Type	Amount	Detail
Child Care Costs	Varies depending the assessed needs	<p>Lone parents, who wish to return to education, start a traineeship or take up employment opportunities, will be assisted by their Personal Advisors to identify funds to cover or contribute to child-care costs.</p> <p>In the first instance, colleges, the Care to Learn Fund, Entry to Employment (E2E), Sure Start and DWP must be approached as sources of potential child care funding. Where appropriate, and dependent on an assessment of need, with all options having been explored without success, the Council may contribute towards the costs of child care.</p> <p>See: Childcare Costs while Studying or Training in the Support in Employment Section, and the Maternity Grant Section</p>
Young Mothers and Fathers	Up to £200	<p>If you are a care leaver who is pregnant, preparing to become a parent or with a child or children, we will support you and your child, as the Corporate Grandparent</p> <p>Your Leaving Care Personal Advisor will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on assessment of need, Care leavers up to age of 25 will receive a one-off grant of £200 grant from the Leaving Care team to purchase essential items for their baby. Please speak to your PA about this. • Support you do the best for your child and help you arrange childcare, if this is what you want • Take an interest in your child • Your Personal Adviser will support and advise you to identify services or support you might need including working with your Community Midwife or Health Visitor • Your Person advisor will also help you get advice about help with childcare, benefits and any grants you may be entitled to – for example, Sure Start maternity grant this accessible from your midwife if you are on a low income

Support from the Council:		
Type	Amount	Detail
Laptop Grant	Up to £300 one off payment	Depending on an assessment of need young people entering full time Further Education and Higher Education will be provided with a one-off Laptop Grant and young people may top-up this amount to purchase a higher specification device.
Winter Utilities & Heating Allowance	£10 per month for the 1 st winter of independent living Up to a total of £60	<p>Care leavers living in semi-independent or independent accommodation who are responsible for, and pay, variable utility/service and heating costs will be provided with a £10.00 per week (£260.00) winter utilities and heating allowance during their 1st year (winter) of independent living. The allowance is available from the 1st October to the 31st March of the first winter they are living independently.</p> <p>Depending on an assessment of need the allowance can be provided on a weekly, monthly or quarterly basis. The allowance should be paid directly to the young person's utility provider or credited to his or her electricity/gas payment key/card.</p> <p>Total payment £260.00 during the first year of independent living.</p> <p>For most young people this allowance will be provided between their 18th and 19th birthday.</p>
Disabled Students Allowance	Varies	<p>Young people with disabilities will be assisted to identify funds to cover or contribute to their needs. The Social Worker/ Personal Advisor will assist with this task. Disabled Students' Allowances are grants to help meet the extra course costs students can face as a direct result of a disability, mental health condition or specific learning difficulty. They are aimed at helping disabled students to study on an equal basis with other students.</p> <p>See: Physical and Mental Health Needs Section</p>

Support from the Council:		
Type	Amount	Detail
Clothing Allowance (for 16 and 17 year olds who are living in Semi-Independent placement)	£5 per week	The arrangements for providing and spending the clothing allowance should be set out in the young person's pathway plan. This could be paid to the young person, weekly, monthly, quarterly and/or can be provided via a supervised/supported shop
Commencing Work Grant	£100	Children's Services will purchase equipment and/or clothing to assist the young person with their chosen employment e.g. interview clothes, overalls, protective clothing, depending on an assessment of need. Maximum Commencing Work Grant is £100.00. This is provided as a one off.
Young People detained in YOI, or in hospital	£10 per week pocket money and £5 per week clothing allowance	<p>Young People Detained in YOI, or in Hospital - Young people who are remanded, sentenced and/or detained in prison, a young offender's institution, a secure hospital or on juvenile detention (16 & 17 Year Olds) will be provided with up to £10.00 per week pocket money allowance and up to £5.00 per week clothing allowance subject to an assessment of need (only where there is no remuneration/clothing provision at the individual institution).</p> <p>Upon being sentenced, allowances continue for Eligible and Relevant Children subject to the remuneration provided by the establishment as mentioned above. Upon being sentenced, allowances only continue for Qualifying Children subject to an assessment of need, their parental situation, as well as the remuneration provided by the establishment as set out above. Young people who are detained in an NHS provision, or contracted out NHS service provision will be provided with the above allowances based on an assessment of need and risk (until Universal Credit is in Payment [5 weeks]), how these are provided should be set out in the individual placement plan and pathway plan.</p>

Support from the Council:		
Type	Amount	Detail
Care Leavers open to the team who are in prison or being released from prison		<p>Whilst in prison you can receive support from:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offenders Management Unit OMU • Pathway Plan reviews will continue • Your Personal Advisor will remain in touch with you • Nacro (previously National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders) • Support from Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) whilst you are in prison: - IMB members are independent, unpaid and work an average of 2-3 visits per month. Their role is to monitor the day-to-day life in their local prison or facility in the immigration detention estate and ensure that prisoners and detained individuals are treated fairly and humanely. <p>Release from prison:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upon your release your personal advisor will support you to access universal credit, if you're entitled to claim benefits • Whilst waiting for your universal credit to come through the Leaving Care Team will provide you a weekly living allowance of £60.05 for a maximum of 5 weeks. These payments will stop once your universal credit comes through • Your personal advisor will support and advise on submission of housing application to the Housing Department if you have nowhere to live • If required your personal advisor could assist you to make contact with friends and family

Support from the Council:		
Type	Amount	Detail
Deposit and Rent in Advance	Varies	<p>In some circumstances and depending on an assessment of need a deposit and rent in advance may be considered if a care leaver cannot afford this upfront payment to secure housing association independent accommodation or where it can be demonstrated that a private sector option is preferable and appropriate.</p> <p>Where young people are moving into independent accommodation, workers should check if homeless prevention or DHP funding can be applied.</p>
Social Activities and Leisure	Membership	Care Leavers aged 16-25 can have a free gym and swimming membership with Active Luton. Care Leavers who may be interested in this are to speak to their PAs.
Personal Luggage	£35.00	All young people moving to independence or between placements must have appropriate personal luggage to help with the move. At least two items of appropriate personal luggage should be available to each young person. Care leavers who need support with purchasing personal luggage are to speak to their PAs.
Subsistence	Up to £20	<p>Depending on an assessment of need social workers/leaving care personal advisers can purchase refreshments to enable a key work session to be inclusive for the care leavers.</p> <p>As a general principle, key-work session refreshments should be agreed in advance by the Leaving Care Team Manager and should not exceed £20.00 in total (up to £10 each) and occur relatively infrequently.</p>

Support from the Council:		
Type	Amount	Detail
Key Documents	Up to £100 for passport and birth certificate.	<p>Children's Services will purchase either a passport or pay for a passport renewal (including paying for the cheque and send facility) for each young person up to the age of 25.</p> <p>In addition, Children's Services will purchase a birth certificate for each young person (if they do not have one) up to the age of 25.</p> <p>In circumstances where an Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking young Person loses their Biometric Card, Children's Services will pay for one replacement (£75.20), subject to an assessment of need.</p> <p>Children's Services will purchase a travel document for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (Young People) dependent on an assessment of need (£72.00 to £280.00).</p> <p>For UASC who have leave to remain in the UK aged up to 25 who are making application for indefinite leave to remain in the UK - based on assessment needs. Children Service will consider funding only the application fee for indefinite leave to remain and subsequent application for naturalisation.</p>
Introduction to Driving Allowance (Aged 17-25 years)	Varies	<p>Subject to an assessment of need, Children's Services will provide/pay the costs of obtaining the following 'Introduction to Driving' package to assist a young person's employability and to provide an additional identity document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. 1 provisional driving licence; B. 1 theory test, upon evidence of pass mark of practice tests; C. 1 theory test booklet/CD Rom/App; D. Pay for 10 driving lessons and the young person is expected to fund the other 10 lessons (1 hour per lesson) if the young person is assessed as pass ready and does not have any driving convictions; E. 1 practical driving test.

Support from the Council:		
Type	Amount	Detail
Emergency Payments	Up to £20	<p>The Leaving Care Team operates an in- house Foodbank to provide emergency food and toiletries to those most in need. If you need emergency clothing speak to your PA who will assess your need. Personal advisers will support young people to access the foodbank (in-house) or within the community in situations where the young person requires emergency food, clothing or support with utility payments.</p> <p>Emergency payments for utility be up to £20 and it is a one-off payment.</p>

Benefits (help with living costs, from the government):		
Type	Amount	Detail
Universal Credit	The amount payable is in line with the universal credit rate. For more details refer to Department for Work and Pensions' website	You can claim this if you are aged between 18-24, not in full-time education, actively seeking/ available for work or working under 16 hours per week.

Benefits (help with living costs, from the government):

Type	Amount	Detail
Income Support	The amount payable is in line with the government's universal rate. For details refer to Department for Work and Pensions' website	You can claim this if you are aged between 16-19, in fulltime education and either a parent, not living with a parent, or a refugee. Care leavers can continue to receive income support until the age 22 if your claim started before you turned 21 and you're still in education.
Housing Benefit	Varies	You can claim this if you live away from family, have a low income and have less than £16,000 in savings, you can get help with your rent. People who cannot claim include EU jobseekers, asylum seekers without leave to remain and full-time students (unless you have children). Different rates apply depending on where you live. Care leavers eligible for housing benefit should be entitled to the full one-bedroom rate up to the age of 22.

Note: Universal Credit has replaced some individual benefits with a single payment that considers all your financial needs.

Grants (these do not need to be repaid):

Type	Amount	Detail
Care Leavers' Foundation	Up to £400	Awards grants to care leavers aged 18-29 for things like household items, emergency living expenses, education costs, medical needs, training and employment. thecareleaversfoundation.org

Grants (these do not need to be repaid):

Type	Amount	Detail
Capstone Care Leavers Trust	From £300 to £2,000	Awards grants to care leavers aged 17-25, for education courses and equipment (including travel), driving lessons/tests and household items. capstonecareleaverstrust.org
Buttle UK	Up to £2,000	Awards grants to estranged young people aged 16-20 for support with education, employment and training, setting up home, and improving emotional and physical wellbeing. Applications should be made by statutory or voluntary organisations on your behalf. buttleUK.org
The Spark Foundation	Up to £600	Awards grants to care leavers up to age 25 for setting up home, education/employment, skills and interests. sparkfoundation.org.uk
Lawrence Atwell's Charity	From £100 to £1,500	Awards grants to young people aged 16-26 to help with training courses, including buying equipment, living expenses during the course and fees for tuition, enrolment or exams. theskinnerscompany.org.uk/grants-andtrusts/lawrence-atwells-charity
The Prince's Trust	Varies	Awards grants for young people aged 17-25, working fewer than 16 hours, or in education for fewer than 14 hours per week, to help with getting into work, education or training; loans are also on offer to help you start a business. princes-trust.org.uk

APPENDIX B: USEFUL WEBSITES AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Service	Description	Link to Website
Apprenticeships		www.apprenticeships.org.uk
Become Charity		https://www.becomecharity.org.uk/
Care Leavers' Foundation		www.thecareleaversfoundation.org
Coram Children's Legal Centre		www.childrenslegalcentre.com
Government gateway to claiming benefits		www.direct.gov.uk/benefits
Luton Advise and Support to Young People		www.youth.luton.gov.uk
NYAS		https://www.nyas.net/
Propel Charity		https://propel.org.uk/UK/
Share Foundation (Junior ISA)		www.sharefound.org
Student Finance England		www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance
TOKKO		http://tokko.co.uk/
UCAS		www.ucas.com
Vulnerable Young Persons Bursary		https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2019-to-2020-academic-year

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