

**What Makes The Difference?
TOOLS and RESOURCES**

NAME OF TOOL/RESOURCE: Rainer Surrey 16plus Service Financial Assistance for Care Leavers Finance Policy

NAME AND REGION OF AGENCY/ORGANISATION THAT DEVELOPED THIS TOOL/RESOURCE:
Rainer Surrey 16plus Service

Purpose and Brief Description of Tool/Resource:

Provides a clear policy that addresses the financial needs of Looked After and Formerly Looked After young people, on the basis of equal opportunity of access to services and resources, in their preparation to transition to Independent Living and Adulthood thereby improving the life chances of young people living in and leaving local authority care.

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Evidence for the effectiveness/ impact of this tool/resource

Positive impact of this tool/resource:

1. The policy helps to ensure that individual assessments of financial need are explicitly linked to and inform Pathway Plans
2. PAs, staff, finance panel members and young people are clear about financial entitlement, application process and procedures

Proposal to implement a separate document LAC 24(A) April 2006 - Financial Assistance for Care Leavers, Finance Policy
Extract from LAC 24 October 2004 (Page 15 to 22)

Rainer Surrey 16plus Service Financial Assistance for Care Leavers Finance Policy

Please read this section in conjunction with Financial Assistance Panel Guidance. The Guidance includes a section on Private Rented and Supporting People funded housing. A copy is available from the 16plus Service Finance section.

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Policy

- Provide a system that addresses the financial needs of Looked After and Formerly Looked After young people, on the basis of equal opportunity of access to services and resources, in their preparation to transition to Independent Living and Adulthood thereby improving the life chances of young people living in and leaving local authority care.

Objectives

- Ensure the individual assessments of financial need are explicitly linked to and inform Care Plans and Pathway Plans when the primary focus is Independent Living.
- Ensure that Financial Assistance Panels meet once a month, and that the financial systems are managed so as not to disadvantage young people in their administration or application (one Panel covers NW and SW the other Panel covers NE and SE).
- Ensure that financial assistance complements the overall support requirements to enhance an individual care leaver's life choice.
- Ensure that financial assistance is clear and published to young people in a Leaflet.

Introduction

- Finance Panels have been set up to ensure consistency in the allocation of financial assistance for Young People preparing for adulthood and towards living

independently. This will be achieved by the use of a single financial assessment procedure for all groups of care leavers (see care leaver groups 2a – d above).

- The Rainer Surrey 16plus Service Personal Adviser (Case Holder) submitting a request for financial assistance must ensure that the paperwork is completed accurately. Failure to do so may result in young people suffering financial hardship.
- Personal Advisers should cross-reference these procedures with the Financial Assistance Panel Guidance available from Rainer Surrey 16plus Service Financial Assistants to ensure young people maximise other sources of income.
- Where the term 'Personal Adviser(s)' is used in this document it should be taken to include 'Assistant Personal Adviser(s)'.

Eligible Young People

The Financial Assistance and the Independent Living Grant will be accessible for LAC 16/17 year olds where:

- The Pathway Plan clearly states a planned move into Independent Living.
- They live in planned Independent Living or in Semi-independent Living accommodation. This will not include payment of rent, this will continue to be paid via the placement budget currently held by SCS Area Teams, until such time as this budget is transferred to the Rainer Surrey 16plus Service.
- They or a guarantor hold a Licence or Tenancy Agreement.

The Financial Assistance Panel **would not meet** the cost of Eligible young people where:

- They are on a Care Order or Looked After and in Residential Care or Foster Placement including Lodgings or Out of County Placement or Living at Home (after 6 months period of rehabilitation a young person could potentially access State Benefits).
- Fostering Budget & Placement Budgets will cover Residential, Fostering and Agency Placements expenditure. It is anticipated that the Rainer Surrey 16plus Service will manage the Placement budgets from 1st April 2006. New procedures will be inserted to cover these payment processes.

20/3/06
Alaster
Calder: if
on a care
order can
a young
person
claim
benefits

Duties of the Responsible Authority i.e. Surrey County Council

- Decisions on the level of financial assistance to be provided will be based upon the Personal Adviser's Needs Assessment of the young person which will inform/change the Pathway Plan in accordance with the young person's future needs or as circumstances dictate.
- Under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 the Responsible Authority will be an Eligible or Relevant young person's (16/17 year olds) primary source of income.

Exceptions to income maintenance duties of the Responsible Authority.

- Relevant Young people, who have returned home for a period of 6 months or more are no longer Relevant, but retain entitlement to financial support as a Qualifying Section 24 of CA 1989 young person. If the placement at home of a Relevant Young Person breaks down within 6 months and before the young person is 18, he/she becomes a Relevant Young Person again.
- Eligible young people who are living at home successfully after six months could potentially access State Benefits. For the first six months of the placement at home the family will be entitled to claim Child Benefit and possibly Tax Credit if their son/daughter is still in full-time non-advanced education.
- Young people who are 'looked after' on a series of short-term placements (less than 4 weeks) are not Eligible or Relevant, even if the total period 'looked after' is more than 13 weeks.
- Lone parents or sick or disabled young people and disabled students can access state benefits (but not Housing Benefit) therefore additional support only is to be provided.
- Care leavers qualifying for advice and assistance under Section 24(2) of CA 1989 are Non Relevant young people. Their primary source of income support remains with

the Department for Work and Pensions. The local authority may give financial assistance on account of their particular need or in exceptional circumstances, until the age of 21 (or up to 24 if connected to education or training). There is a duty to provide vacation accommodation up to 24.

- The Panel will only consider financial assistance for Young People residing outside of the UK in exceptional circumstances.

Benefits entitlement

- Receipt of benefits will be taken into account when assessing the needs of young people (refer to benefits entitlement in the Guidance).

Minimum Standards

- For 16/17 year olds the Guidance states that 'No young people should receive a package for his accommodation and living.... Which comes to less than he would have received if claiming IS, JSA or HB (or equivalent benefit) at the rates, which would have applied to him and his circumstances'.
- The minimum standards are intended to protect a young person against the possibility they may be offered inadequate assistance.
- Financial assistance for accommodation costs, other than supported accommodation e.g. private sector accommodation, will be linked to Housing Benefit restrictions. (Cross reference financial assistance for young people in education Section.)

Transparent Criteria

- The Rainer Surrey 16plus Service will provide clear written information to young people on what financial assistance is available via an information leaflet and how to access this via their Personal Adviser.
- It must also be clear on how other sources of income are to be treated i.e. inheritance, criminal injury compensation or other such sources (refer to Guidance, Financial Assessment section).

Funding

This may include the following: (This list is not exhaustive)

- Living Allowance and Incentives if in EET.
- Accommodation costs where a Licence or Tenancy Agreement is issued or Emergency provision in 'Suitable Accommodation'.
- Travel expenses e.g. for education, contact with support networks etc.
- Education, Training, Employment costs, materials and special equipment.
- Independent Living Grants (ILG).
- Special needs e.g. costs related to cultural or religious needs.
- One off costs e.g. for rent deposits or assessed clothing needs.
- In exceptional circumstances consideration will be given to leisure/hobby costs/educational trips (refer to Guidance, additional needs).

Funding from other sources

- Alternative and additional funding is available from a wide range of schemes, grants, bursaries, hardship or social funds, loans, organisations, charities or local authority budgets and where appropriate these should be investigated and applied for e.g. Education and Training (refer to the Financial Assistance Panel Guidance).

The Panels

- The Multi-agency Panels, chaired by a Rainer Surrey 16plus Service Team Manager (in their absence by the Rainer Surrey 16plus Service Manager), will meet once a month (normally on the second Thursday of the month) to consider requests for financial assistance.

Membership of the Panels

- Rainer Surrey 16plus Team Manager
- Rainer Surrey 16plus Team ATM

- Independent Review Section Co-ordinator or IRO
- Fostering Team Representative
- Senior Benefits Policy Adviser
- Connexions 16 plus Personal Adviser
- Rainer Surrey 16plus Service Finance Administrator

New members to Panel can expect to observe a Panel and meet with the Chair and/or Finance Administrator prior to joining the decision making process.

The Panels do not want to disadvantage young people; therefore at the discretion of the Chair and in exceptional circumstances, the Panels will sit without a quorum of four.

In circumstances where a member of the Panels has a young person whose case they hold is being presented, can take no part in the decision making process i.e. ATM, Rainer Surrey 16plus Service Personal Adviser (Case holder) can take no part in decision making. Exclusion in decision-making does not extend to where a Panel member is line manager to a Personal Adviser's case.

Timescales and Submitting Requests

- Rainer Surrey 16plus Service Personal Advisers (Case holders) should submit typed requests for funding, on the standard application form (FAP 1) for financial assistance, to their Line Manager for recommendation by the Friday prior to Panel. (FAP 2 is the standard application form with printed guidance).
- The Line Manager will submit to the Finance Administrator by the Tuesday prior to Panel. Electronic Application forms are available on the Rainer Surrey 16plus Service shared drive and S-net. The Panels will only accept typed applications, submitted within deadlines..
- Young People should be encouraged by their Personal Adviser to make personal representations to Panel and are advised to indicate this preference so that an appointment may be made. Travel and out of pocket expenses will be considered to facilitate Young People's attendance.
- All other funding sources should be explored before submitting a request to Panel. A Personal Adviser must assist and /or advise a young person with exploring alternative funding sources.
- A Personal Adviser will assist and/or advise a young person to make a claim for appropriate benefits if their main income or living expenses is via the Benefits System. Entitlement to benefit must be made clear and subsequent applications for financial assistance via the panel must reflect these applications.
- If the application is for financial assistance whilst awaiting the outcome of a Benefits claim one month only will be considered and re-assessed after the first month.
- An advance claim for Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) can be made 3 months prior to a young person's 18th birthday this will assist with the process when attending the Interview for Work on or close to the young persons birth date. (According to regulation 13 of the Claims and Payments Regulations)
- If JSA is not processed within 2 weeks an interim payment should be requested. (According to regulation 2(2), Social Security [payments on account, overpayments & recovery] Regs 1998)
- If HB is not processed within 14 days a payment on account MUST be made by the Housing department. (According to regulation 91(1) Housing Benefit [General] Regs....)
- If the request is for a young person in the 1st year of Training/FE/HE the application should be for the 1st Term only. If the request is for the 2nd and subsequent years Training/FE/HE the full academic year costs can be applied for.

Requests (Under £100) – not submitted via FAP

- Some requests for financial assistance under £100 can be presented on Financial Assistance Panel Payment Request Form (FAP 3a or FAB 3b) and can be approved by the Rainer Surrey 16plus Team Manager or Assistant Team Manager outside of panel.
- All requests must be supported with relevant paperwork as evidence and consideration given to FAP Policy and Guidance.

- Passport
- Birth Certificate
- Photos for Identification
- Birthday payment
- Achievement awards
- Bonus Payments
- Set Up Cost
- Support Worker assistance costs
- Educational costs
- Personal carrier / suitcase
- Dental costs up to £50
- Opticians costs up to £50
- Other Additional Needs costs up to £50
- Health and Dental Check Incentive (£30 respectively)

Urgent Requests from Young People where Surrey is the Receiving or Host Authority.

Reference National Inter-Authority protocol above.

- If a Relevant (or Eligible) young person from another authority's area presents to a Surrey Children's Service or Team or the Rainer Surrey 16plus Service and needs short-term financial assistance, this should be provided by the team that the Young Person presents to under Section 17 –1989 Children Act. It is that Team's responsibility to make contact with the Responsible Authority (local authority of origin that last looked after that young person) to agree, with the young person, on what the short-term plan will be (which may facilitate a return to the young person's Responsible Authority or remain in the new authority or move somewhere different again).
- As the Responsible Authority holds the income living duty, the Surrey Team or the Rainer Surrey 16plus Team receiving the young person should arrange to invoice the Responsible Authority for any Section 17 monies paid to the young person, after agreement with the said authority. During this process, if the Surrey Team or the Rainer Surrey 16plus Service requires further advice they should contact the Responsible Authority's Rainer Surrey 16plus Service Duty Manager.

Urgent Requests (Under £100)

- Requests for financial assistance under £100 should be presented on Financial Assistance Panel Payment Request Form (FAP 3a or FAB 3b) and can, in an emergency between panels, be approved by the Rainer Surrey 16plus Team Manager or Assistant Team Manager.
- Approval for the following may be considered.
This list is not exhaustive
 - Living Allowance – 2 weeks living allowance whilst awaiting benefits if proof is provided that benefits have been applied for.
 - Emergency Living allowance - Food Vouchers with evidence of need
 - Living Allowance / Incentive for young people in EET, where ceased between Panels.
 - Travel costs where urgency and need has been evidenced - where impractical to send a travel warrant the value of travel will be sent
 - ILG items where urgency and need has been evidenced
 - Clothing items where urgency and need has been evidenced
 - Emergency Accommodation e.g. B&B where a longer period cannot be agreed due to unavailability of the Service / Team Manager.
 - Interpreter costs

Urgent Requests (Over £100)

- Requests, between panels, should be presented on Financial Assistance Panel Application Form (FAP 1), attaching relevant information as appendices, to a Rainer Surrey 16plus Team ATM or Rainer Surrey 16plus Team Manager or Rainer Surrey 16plus Service, Service Manager.

- Approval for the following may be considered.
This list is not exhaustive
 - Financial assistance for young people in EET, where ceased between Panels
 - Travel costs where urgency and need has been evidenced - where impractical to send a travel warrant the value of travel will be sent
 - ILG items where urgency and need has been evidenced – essential items only
 - Emergency Accommodation e.g. B&B where between Panels.
 - Rent deposit / 1st months rent

Loans

- Loans will not be agreed

Independent Living Grant (ILG) items (Refer to Guidance)

- Independent Living Grant (ILG) may be applied for, up to a maximum of £2000, to equip living accommodation. ILG is assessed on need.

Health and Dental Check Incentive scheme (C19)

- Every child or young person who gives consent for a statutory annual health or dental check on a yearly basis is entitled to an incentive. (Refer to Guidance for current incentive details). Any monetary incentive will be met by the Surrey Children's Service central budget.

General Principles adopted by the 16plus Service for Young People in School/ Year 11, Further and Higher Education & Training

The Thomas Coram Research Unit Institute of Education, University of London in association with the Frank Buttle Trust and undertook the By Degrees project which considered two main questions:

- How can young people who have been in public care be encouraged to enter higher education?
- And once there, how can they be helped to get the most out of their time at university?

Research findings from the By Degrees project have been published in Going to university from care: final report of the By Degrees project written by Sonia Jackson, Sarah Ajayi and Margaret Quigley.

The Children Act 2004 places a new duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children. For consultation on the statutory guidance accompanying the duty please go to <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations/>

The Children Leaving Care Act 2000 states that 'it is the duty of the local Authority to give former relevant child assistance...to the extent that his welfare and his education or training needs require it'.

Wherever possible financial and advice & guidance incentives should be given to young people to pursue educational or training opportunities and to find/keep employment.

Consideration will be given to applications for weekly living allowances, rent and travel and other related expenses from young people in education and training who can demonstrate:

- Through the Pathway Planning Process a commitment to complete the education or training course they have chosen.
- The completion of their chosen course will assist them in obtaining employment and/or gathering the skills to live a more independent life.

- They would be seriously disadvantaged in undertaking their course without funding from the Rainer Surrey 16plus Service.
- They meet the expectations of 16plus Service and Financial Assistance Panel as outlined below.

Implementing this policy will ensure that clear advice can be given to young people in and leaving care to what support they can expect if they choose to pursue Further / Higher education. It aims to ensure that young people are offered suitable support in making the most of the opportunities offered in Further / Higher Education.

Financial Assistance for Young People in School / Year 11

A young person who is at School / Year 11 will be supported financially in the same way as they where previously by Surrey Children's Service until the end of the school year or until a change in their circumstances. At this time it is anticipated that a financial assessment would be undertaken to determine their financial needs and means. (Refer to FAP Guidance: School / Year 11 section)

Financial Assistance for Young People in Further Education (non-advanced)

Course Fees

A young person 16-19 years old (rising to 20 years from April 2006) must make an application to their Local Education Authority (LEA) for course funding. This application must clearly indicate that the young person is an independent student due to their leaving care status and will therefore not be required to pay course fees.

A young person 21 years old (from April 2006) should explore alternative funding for course fees or apply to Panel for course funding. This application must clearly indicate the reasons why alternative funding cannot be secured and evidence outcomes of applications.

Accommodation / Rent

Young people may apply to Financial Assistance Panel for accommodation/ rent costs, if s/he has no other income because of their education commitment.

When a young person is eligible for financial assistance towards rent, this will be paid directly to the Landlord.

Under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 the Responsible Authority must provide vacation accommodation, or the means to secure it for those young people in residential Further Education

The General Care and Support element for Eligible young people living in semi-independent/supported accommodation and not entitled to claim Housing Benefit will be met in full, as will the benefit element, via the Care Packages and Placements Budget. The Supporting People Team will invoice the relevant Surrey Children's Service Team separately for these costs.

The General Care and Support element for Former Relevant and Qualifying young people living in semi-independent/supported accommodation and not entitled to claim Housing Benefit will be met in full, as will the benefit element. The Supporting People Team will invoice the Rainer Surrey 16plus Service separately for these costs.

Living Allowances

Financial Assistance for Young People Living Independently;

Young people may apply to Financial Assistance Panel for weekly living allowances, if s/he has no other income because of their education commitment.

The weekly level of living allowance will be based on a financial assessment of the young persons means to contribute i.e. in employment and set at 100% of the 16 to 24 year olds' Income Support level. A disregard of £15.00 will be made on a young persons income / wage when in part time or full time employment and undertaking a Further Education course.

Young people will be expected to cover all their expenses, inclusive of food, from their living allowance. This does not apply for 16/17 year olds in a foster placement or residential provision or supported lodgings.

Financial Assistance for Young People NOT Living Independently;

Young people **NOT** Living Independently i.e. Continuing Care Placements, Residential Placements, Lodgings Placements, Placement with Parents or living at home will be assessed on an individual basis. In these circumstances consideration would need to be given to the Young Persons means to contribute.

Travel assistance

Travel for Summer Schools and Interviews - Young People can apply for financial assistance for travel expenses and expenses associated with attending summer schools and interviews.

Travel To/from School /College - an application for financial assistance for travel to and from school or college would be considered by Panel. Young people must have explored other funding options including travel costs being met by the school or college for some courses e.g. trips.

Incentives

In addition to living allowance, young people may apply to Financial Assistance Panel for a weekly incentive (FAP 4).

If a young person is in receipt of Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) they will not receive an additional incentive.

A young person is expected to attend for a minimum of 80% - Incentive will only be paid if a young person has a minimum 80% attendance unless in exceptional circumstances.

A young person must provide evidence that they have maintained 80% attendance. Incentive payments will stop immediately if a young person's attendance falls below the required 80% and will not be reinstated until a period of 80% attendance is achieved and maintained.

How to Apply for financial assistance from Rainer Surrey 16plus service

Study courses should be planned, in advance, with prospects clearly identified. Details of the arrangements must be reflected in the Pathway Plan.

Finance Applications for Educational Support, as with all Further and Higher Education costs, must be accompanied with appropriate evidence.

When considering Further Education Young People should consult with their 16plus Service Personal Advisor who will then assist them with an application for financial assistance to the Financial Assistance Panel for Care Leavers in the summer prior to the start of their course.

If an application is for the 1st year of FE the application should be for the 1st Term only. If the request is for the 2nd and subsequent years of FE the full academic year costs can be applied for.

When a financial assistance application has been submitted to Panel and approved, the 16plus Service Personal Advisor will confirm in writing, a summary of the financial package in place. (FAP 10)

Following confirmation of funding regular payments e.g. living allowance, incentive, rent will be automatically generated by the 16plus Service Finance Team, therefore the payment details/method need to be completed on the FAP1 application form. Payment may be made in the form of an electronic payment or cheque to the Young Person or accommodation provider, as specified. The preferred method of payment is direct to a bank account (electronically) therefore it is Panel's expectation that Personal Advisers / Assistant Personal Advisers assist Young People to open bank accounts as identified in the Pathway and Pathway Plan process.

If there is a change in your circumstances you must advise your Personal Advisor immediately who will undertake a review of your circumstances and submit a new/ revised application for financial assistance.

Expectations of Rainer Surrey 16plus Service and Financial Assistance Panel

The expectation of the Rainer Surrey 16plus Service is that all young people in receipt of Financial Assistance must fulfil the course requirements in terms of attendance and study. It is the Personal Adviser's responsibility to inform the young person of these expectations and to ensure that these requirements are met and this will be included in a letter (FAP10) informing the young person of the decision regarding payment of allowances.

Young people must:

- Provide course details.
- Provide evidence of acceptance on the course.
- Attend the course a minimum of 80% of the time.

- Complete all course work.
- Inform the Rainer Surrey 16plus Service of any change in circumstances.
- Provide evidence of rent/accommodation costs and where this is to be paid.
- Apply for all grant, loans and benefits for which they may be entitled and provide evidence of doing so and outcomes.
- Provide consent for the Personal Adviser to contact learning establishment to liaise with relevant tutors to monitor progress OR provide a 'to whom it may concern' letter, periodically as required, from their tutor confirming attendance as expected and list any assignments due and if they have been handed in. This letter should also indicate if the young person is experiencing difficulties with anything and indicate an action plan, which may be to use additional support at the education establishment.
- Provide confirmation from the education establishment that they are a continuing student at the start of each term/semester. This letter must be in advance of the start of the new term/semester and from the tutor.
- Let their 16plus Service Personal Adviser know if they are experiencing any difficulties. Further Education can be daunting and the 16plus Service Personal Advisor will be able to offer support, reassurance, advise and guidance.

Failure to adhere to these expectations may result in allowances and/or other payments being withdrawn. Payments/ allowances in these circumstances, if reinstated, may not be backdated.

Other Funding available while in School, Year 11 and Further Education Learning Support Fund

Budgets and policies differ throughout educational establishments. Cases assessed on need through Student Support services at individual learning establishment. This could assist with travel costs books, equipment etc.

Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

This is a fixed weekly amount but dependent on regular attendance and completion of set work. EMA is ignored for benefits purposes.

Student who are working

A financial assessment will be undertaken and income e.g. wages will be taken into account when receiving financial assistance from the 16plus Service. A disregard of £15.00 will be made on a young persons income / wage when in part time or full time employment and undertaking a Further Education course.

Young people will be expected to cover all their expenses, inclusive of food, from their living allowance.

During Vacations and/or following completion of a course

Financial assistance payments of living allowance, incentive and travel during half term/ reading weeks will **not cease**. Young people in education will often take this opportunity to continue with their coursework /additional study during this time, traveling to college or libraries. The only academic breaks when the living allowance, incentive and travel will stop are Christmas, Easter and summer.

Young People are expected to either seek Employment or claim Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance (if entitled) during vacations and/or following the completion of a course.

If the young person is a full time student s/he cannot usually claim IS or JSA for the duration of the course, including vacations. Young People should consult with their Personal Adviser for entitlement to benefits who will then assist them with a claim.

If young people can claim IS/JSA or secure Employment the 16plus Service will not fund living expenses during holidays or vacations.

If young people cannot claim IS/JSA or secure Employment they will have to apply to Financial Assistance Panel for financial assistance towards living expenses with clear reasons.

Students with a disability

Disabled students and students with additional needs are able to access additional financial assistance via the College

Students who are Parents

Panel will consider a reasonable contribution towards childcare costs. Other funding sources must be explored and evidence of this submitted with the request. Requests must be in advance of the academic terms and breaks. Written evidence must be presented from the

childcare establishment. Panel will not meet costs of 'optional' costs from a childcare establishment. Panel may consider requests for additional childcare to cover vacations and breaks. They must be submitted one month in advance of the vacation / break and give clear reasons and evidence of why additional support is needed.

Course Equipment

A young person must apply to the College for the cost of books and equipment that are essential to their particular course. If an application is made to Panel for assistance with course equipment/costs the outcome of these applications e.g. for the Learning Support Fund, must accompany the application and a letter from the relevant learning establishment must be provided as evidence.

Computer Equipment

Young people can apply for a computer, on loan, to help with their education. Young people in School, Further Education or Training can make an application to the Rainer Surrey 16plus Service for the loan of a computer. Financial assistance for a desk and chair may also be requested via Financial Assistance Panel

Benefits Entitlements for students in Further Education

Young People are expected to either seek Employment and/ or claim Housing Benefit (if entitled – refer to FAP Guidance benefits entitlement) during vacations and/or following the completion of a course. If the young person is a full time student s/he cannot usually claim HB for the duration of the course, including vacations. Young People should consult with their Personal Adviser for entitlement to benefits who will then assist them with a claim.

If Young people can claim Housing Benefit or secure Employment the 16plus Service will not fund 100% accommodation costs during holidays or vacations.

At 16/17 young people are not normally entitled to benefits. A young person who is in Further Education and is 18-20 years old or under (April 2006) will normally be entitled to benefits and at 20 years old eligibility to Income Support and/or Job Seekers Allowance and Housing Benefit ceases for students (certain disabled students and lone parents should continue to be entitled) and a student loan cannot be claimed. Young People should consult with their Personal Adviser for entitlement to benefits who will then assist them with a claim.

Financial Assistance for Young People in Higher Education (Advanced)

Tuition Fees:

From 2006, universities in England can charge up to £3000 for Tuition Fees per year. This is not payable until the end of the course - all students can get a Student Loan to cover Tuition Fees, but the young person should let the university know that as a Care Leaver they are an 'independent student'. Personal Advisers will help the young person with any forms to be filled in.

The 16plus Service is still in discussion with Surrey County Council to see if it can help Surrey Care Leavers with the cost of Tuition Fees.

As a Care Leaver in Surrey, in Higher education, you will receive from Rainer Surrey 16plus Service:

Accommodation / Rent

For young people in Higher Education financial assistance will be available to pay 100% of student accommodation cost including Christmas, Easter and Summer Breaks if the young person is not entitled to State Benefit.

Living Allowance for Young People Living Independently;

When living independently Financial Assistance with living expenses will be considered at 50% the rate of Income Support for 18-24 year olds if the young person is not entitled to state benefits.

Living Allowance for Young People NOT Living Independently;

Young people NOT Living Independently i.e. Continuing Care Placements, Lodgings Placements or living at home will be assessed on an individual basis. In these circumstances consideration would need to be given to the Young Persons means to contribute.

Access to the Independent Living Grant

Students should be offered access to the independent living grant to purchase bedding etc as they would if moving into any independent living accommodation.

Travel assistance

Financial assistance for travel to and from College or University and field trips would be considered by Panel. Young people must have explored other funding options including travel costs being met by the College or University for some courses.

Incentives

In addition to living allowance, young people may apply to Financial Assistance Panel for a weekly incentive (FAP 4).

A young person is expected to attend for a minimum of 80% - Incentive will only be paid if a young person has a minimum 80% attendance unless in exceptional circumstances.

A young person must provide evidence that they have maintained 80% attendance. Incentive payments will stop immediately if a young person's attendance falls below the required 80% and will not be reinstated until a period of 80% attendance is achieved and maintained.

How to Apply for financial assistance from Rainer Surrey 16plus service

Study courses should be planned, in advance, with prospects clearly identified. Details of the arrangements must be reflected in the Pathway Plan.

Finance Applications for Educational Support, as with all Further and Higher Education costs, must be accompanied with appropriate evidence.

When considering Higher Education Young People should consult with their 16plus Service Personal Advisor who will then assist them with an application for financial assistance to the Financial Assistance Panel for Care Leavers in the summer prior to the start of their course.

If an application is for the 1st year of HE the application should be for the 1st Term only. If the request is for the 2nd and subsequent years of HE the full academic year costs can be applied for.

When a financial assistance application has been submitted to Panel and approved, the 16plus Service Personal Advisor will confirm in writing, a summary of the financial package in place. (FAP 10)

Following confirmation of funding regular payments e.g. living allowance, incentive, rent will be automatically generated by the 16plus Service Finance Team, therefore the payment details/method need to be completed on the FAP1 application form. Payment may be made in the form of an electronic payment or cheque to the Young Person or accommodation provider, as specified. The preferred method of payment is direct to a bank account (electronically) therefore it is Panel's expectation that Personal Advisers / Assistant Personal Advisers assist Young People to open bank accounts as identified in the Pathway and Pathway Plan process.

If there is a change in your circumstances you must advise your Personal Advisor immediately who will undertake a review of your circumstances and submit a new/ revised application for financial assistance.

Expectations of Rainer Surrey 16plus Service and Financial Assistance Panel

The expectation of the Rainer Surrey 16plus Service is that all young people in receipt of Financial Assistance must fulfil the course requirements in terms of attendance and study. It is the Personal Adviser's responsibility to inform the young person of these expectations and to ensure that these requirements are met and this will be included in a letter (FAP10) informing the young person of the decision regarding payment of allowances.

Young people must:

- Provide course details.
- Provide evidence of acceptance on the course.
- Attend the course a minimum of 80% of the time.
- Complete all course work.
- Inform the Rainer Surrey 16plus Service of any change in circumstances.
- Provide evidence of rent/accommodation costs and where this is to be paid.
- Apply for all grant, loans and benefits for which they may be entitled and provide evidence of doing so and outcomes.
- Provide consent for the Personal Adviser to contact learning establishment to liaise with relevant tutors to monitor progress OR provide a 'to whom it may concern' letter,

periodically as required, from their tutor confirming attendance as expected and list any assignments due and if they have been handed in. This letter should also indicate if the young person is experiencing difficulties with anything and indicate an action plan, which may be to use additional support at the education establishment.

- Provide confirmation from the education establishment that they are a continuing student at the start of each term/semester. This letter must be in advance of the start of the new term/semester and from the tutor.
- Let their 16plus Service Person Adviser know if they are experiencing any difficulties. Higher Education can be daunting and the 16plus Service Personal Advisor will be able to offer support, reassurance, advise and guidance.

Failure to adhere to these expectations may result in allowances and/or other payments being withdrawn. Payments/ allowances in these circumstances, if reinstated, may not be backdated.

Other Funding available while in HE

Student Loan

Students who have been in care can apply for a full student loan. The Loan is repayable once students leave the course and start earning in excess of £15,000 per annum. Applying for the full student loan can act as a 'gateway to other financial support.

An application should be made for a Student Loan and/or employment to supplement the living allowance available from the 16plus Service although it is anticipated the financial assistance available will cover expenses at University.

Higher Education [Student] MAINTENANCE GRANT:

All care leavers will be eligible to apply for the non-repayable grant of £2700 per year [*see note below re teaching & nursing bursaries]. This grant is to help with your living and course costs and is usually paid on a termly basis. Your PA can help you with the paperwork.

Bursary Payments:

ALL universities will now be offering a minimum bursary of £300 a year to students who receive the Higher Education Maintenance Grant. Check out www.uniburse.com, which lists all the university bursaries available. Some universities are being very generous so it pays to shop around. [e.g. University of Winchester is offering a £2000 bursary to Care Leavers]. Bursaries are not repayable.

N.B Teaching and Nursing and other Allied Health Professional Courses can now offer generous bursaries. This can affect your entitlement to the FULL Student Maintenance Grant and may in some circumstances reduce it by up to 50%.

Access to Learning Funds:

Universities do have funds to help some students with an unexpected financial problem. If you find yourself in financial difficulty at university, ask Student Services or your Personal Tutor about the Access to Learning Fund. They may well be able to help. Remember to talk with your 16plus Service PA as well.

Student who are working

You can work part time and it doesn't effect the financial assistance you receive from Rainer Surrey 16plus or a Student Loan.

The 16plus Service disregard 100% of a young persons income / wage when in part time or full time employment OR in receipt of a student loan and undertaking a Higher Education course.

During Vacations and/or following completion of a course

Financial assistance payments of living allowance, incentive and travel during half term/ reading weeks will **not cease**. Young people in education will often take this opportunity to continue with their coursework /additional study during this time, traveling to college or libraries. The only academic breaks when the living allowance, incentive and travel will stop are Christmas, Easter and summer.

It is Panels expectation that young people will find employment during these vacations and contribute to their living costs. If there are any reasons why the young person is unable to find employment or contribute then an application, with clear reasons why, will be submitted to the Panel prior to the vacation.

Young People are expected to either seek Employment or claim Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance (if entitled - refer to Guidance benefits entitlement) during vacations and/or following the completion of a course.

If young people can claim IS/JSA or secure Employment the 16plus Service will not fund living expenses during holidays or vacations.

If young people cannot claim IS/JSA or secure Employment they will have to apply to Financial Assistance Panel for financial assistance towards living expenses with clear reasons.

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 states the Responsible Authority must provide Vacation Accommodation, or the means to secure it financial assistance will be given to pay 100% of student accommodation cost including Christmas, Easter and Summer Breaks. Young People are expected to either seek Employment and / or claim Housing Benefit (if entitled) during vacations and/or following the completion of a course.

Financial assistance may also be available for expenses, including travel, associated with attending Summer Schools and interviews.

If a young person completes their education course post 21years old the Panel will only consider further financial assistance if reflected in their Pathway Plan.

Students with a disability

Disabled students and students with additional needs are able to access additional financial assistance via the College or University

Students who are Parents

Panel will consider a reasonable contribution towards childcare costs. Other funding sources must be explored and evidence of this submitted with the request. Requests must be in advance of the academic terms and breaks. Written evidence must be presented from the childcare establishment. Panel will not meet costs of 'optional' costs from a childcare establishment. Panel may consider requests for additional childcare to cover vacations and breaks. They must be submitted one month in advance of the vacation / break and give clear reasons and evidence of why additional support is needed.

Course Equipment

A young person should meet the cost of books and equipment from the Higher Education Grant. If an application is made to Panel for additional assistance with course equipment/costs evidence of cost must accompany the application and a letter from the relevant learning establishment must be provided.

Computer Equipment

Young people can apply for a computer, on, to help with their education. Young people in Higher Education can make an application to the Rainer Surrey 16plus Service for the loan of a computer. Financial assistance for a desk and chair may also be requested via Financial Assistance Panel

Benefits Entitlement for student s in Higher Education

If you are receiving Benefits these will stop as a young person who is in Higher Education and is 19 years old or over (rising to 20 years old in April 2006) will not normally be entitled to benefits (certain disabled students and lone parents should continue to be entitled).

Young People should consult with their Personal Adviser for entitlement to benefits who will then assist them with a claim.

If the young person is a full time student s/he cannot usually claim IS or JSA for the duration of the course, including vacations. Young People should consult with their Personal Adviser for entitlement to benefits who will then assist them with a claim.

If the young person is a full time student s/he cannot usually claim HB for the duration of the course, including vacations. Young People should consult with their Personal Adviser for entitlement to benefits who will then assist them with a claim.

At the end of a course or between courses you can claim Housing Benefit or secure Employment. The 16plus Service will not fund 100% accommodation costs during holidays or vacations in these circumstances.

Breaks in Study / Gap Year

Breaks in Study – e.g. deferment. In exceptional circumstances Panel will support breaks in study for young people who need an unexpected break. Applications should be submitted to Panel with a clear plan for the future and will be assessed on an individual basis. Financial Assistance will not be available during these breaks in study. Panel will not agree to a change in programme of education during the break. The 16plus Service will not consider an extension of the break in study, beyond 1 year.

Gap Year - For those young people wanting to take a Gap year e.g. end of A level Studies and beginning of Higher Education studies. The intention to take a Gap Year should be identified in the Pathway Planning Process wherever possible. Financial Assistance will not

be available during the Gap year. An application to Panel clearly forecasting future funding is required. The same support will be available to young people when they commence their course of Higher Education. Panel will not agree to a change in programme of education during the Gap Year. The 16plus Service will not consider an extension of the Gap year, beyond 1 year.

Gap Year - For those young people wanting to take a Gap year e.g. end of Degree Studies and beginning of Post Graduate Education. Panel will not agree to fund in these circumstances.

Post Graduate Education

The intention to study to Post Graduate level should be identified in the Pathway Planning Process wherever possible. If a young person chooses to follow a degree with a Masters or Post Graduate Course Panel will consider financial assistance. Requests are to be submitted via the Financial Assistance Panel in advance of the new term with a clear assessment of financial assistance. Applications will be considered on an individual basis.

Review of Financial Assistance/Change of Circumstances

A review of a young person's need for Financial Assistance should form part of the Pathway Assessment and Planning until the young person's 21st Birthday (or beyond if in full time education) and thereafter reviewed in line with the Pathway Plan at least 6 monthly or sooner if necessary.

Increased funding or new applications will be submitted to the panel according to the Financial Assistance Application Form Guidance.

The panel will determine a time for review of funding arrangements, as appropriate, identified on feedback form (FAP 6).

Panel Response

- Personal Advisers/Case holders will receive the Panel's decision via Panel Finance Feedback Form – (FAP 6) within 2 working days.

Informing young person when the application is unsuccessful

- A letter (FAP 7) will be sent to the young person by the Administration Team, via the Personal Adviser, if the application is turned down or is only partially agreed. This will explain to the young person the Panel's reasons for rejecting the application and will outline the appeals procedure should they wish to make an appeal.
- The Panel may request additional information prior to a final decision on financial assistance requested. The Panel may request that a Personal Adviser attend Panel if a new application or an explanation is required.
- If the young person is unhappy about the outcome of the application s/he is entitled to make an appeal under the Appeals Process, which is as follows

Disputes and Appeals

- An appeal to the Financial Assistance Panel can be made within 10 working days of the date of the letter (FAP 7), via the Personal Adviser or the Duty Personal Adviser. For this purpose an appeals pro-forma (FAP 8) and a stamped addressed envelope sent to the young person and a copy sent to the Rainer Surrey 16plus Service Personal Adviser (Case holder). The young person may also add a supporting statement. The appeal will be considered at the next Panel and the outcome will be notified within 2 working days. A Rainer Surrey 16plus Service Personal Adviser (Case Holder) and/or young person can attend panel to present an appeal. This would be encouraged, not only to see grievances heard but also to improve the learning and decision making process.
- If this appeal is unsuccessful a second appeal may be made, in writing, to the Rainer Surrey 16plus Service, Service Manager (Lead Officer for Rainer Surrey 16plus Service). A Rainer Surrey 16plus Service, Team Manager will consider the appeal if the Rainer Surrey 16plus Service, Service Manager was involved in the original decision.

- A third appeal may be made if wished to an Independent Panel to include a Surrey Children's Service Representative, the Rainer Regional Manager and an independent person.
- Disputes in relation to finance must be dealt with by means of the 14-day informal resolution before a formal complaint procedure may be invoked. The informal resolution and complaints procedure can be invoked without an appeal.

Policy and Procedural clarification and amendments

- From time to time there are individual circumstances that may not be covered by policy, procedures and accompanying guidance. When significant gaps with regard to a particular case or cases are identified the policy and accompanying procedures will need to be amended by SCC Procedures Group. However, in the short term, so as not to disadvantage young people who may be seeking a decision from Panel, and where the Panel cannot agree a course of action, the Panel will, in the first instance, seek a decision from the Rainer Surrey Executive Service Manager.

Reporting

- The Finance Administration Co-ordinator for the Rainer Surrey 16plus Service will monitor expenditure of funds and make available reports on a monthly basis to the Panels, Rainer Surrey 16plus Service, Service Manager and Operational Management Group and on a quarterly basis to the Surrey Children's Service Central Management Team.
- The budget will be held and administered by the Rainer Surrey 16plus Service, managed by Rainer, on behalf of Surrey Children's Service.