



# **CHILDRENS SOCIAL CARE**

## **University Support Packages For Care Leavers Policy**

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Review Date	January 2022	By: Head of Children's Social Care
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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This policy sets out how Bridgend County Borough Council will support eligible care leavers in Bridgend to attend university, whilst encouraging them to take responsibility and financial ownership for their educational attainment and future employment.**
- 1.2 A framework of financial, emotional and practical support is available for care leavers moving on to Higher Education, which is person-centered and reflective of individual needs, ensuring that young people have the resilience and life tools needed to achieve their full potential.

## **2. LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT**

- 2.1 This policy has been written to comply with the provisions of:
- The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
  - The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014
  - The Children's Act 1989
- 2.2 Other legislation such as: the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010 may also be relevant to particular circumstances, such as providing accessible information about the support that is available that can be understood by Individuals with various disabilities.

## **3. POLICY OBJECTIVES**

- 3.1 The objectives of this policy are for eligible young care leavers in Bridgend to be supported to access Higher Education and to have consistent practical, emotional and financial support that enables them to maintain their university placement and gain their desired qualification.

## **4. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

- 4.1 As Corporate Parent, the Local Authority has a legal duty to provide care and support to children and young people in care. Any eligible care leaver in Bridgend, defined as follows and who has achieved the requisite qualification(s) required for university, will be eligible for the support outlined in this policy:
- A care leaver aged 18 or over who was being looked after by the Local Authority when he or she reached the age of 18;
  - A former care leaver under the age of 25 who reconnects to care for education or training purposes;

- A young person under the age of 21 who left care under a Special Guardianship Order.
- 4.2 The Local Authority may also give support in certain circumstances if the young person is under the age of 25 and left care under a Special Guardianship Order. Such circumstance is where the Local Authority may disregard any interruption in education if it is satisfied that the young person will resume the programme as soon as reasonably practicable. In these circumstances, it may provide the young person with suitable out-of-term time accommodation, or pay enough to secure suitable accommodation.

## **5. POLICY SCOPE**

- 5.1 This policy and its associated procedures have been comprehensively revised in order to reflect legislation and best practice. Amendments to the policy will be subject to approval by the Local Authority.
- 5.2 The policy is applicable to:
- all elected Members and officers of the Local Authority;
  - eligible care leavers in Bridgend.

## **6. FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

- 6.1 This policy requires that any care leaver who wishes to attend university should apply for all funding they are eligible for.
- 6.2 Care leavers will be supported by the Local Authority to apply for all financial support available to them, including:
- A Tuition Fee Loan to cover the amount of the care leaver's £9,000 university fees each year, which they will be required to repay once earning over an agreed amount;
  - The non-repayable, annual Maintenance Grant of £8,100 a year;
  - An annual Maintenance Loan of up to £1,125 should the care leaver require it;
- 6.3 The Local Authority will provide care leavers attending university with a higher education bursary to the value of £2000 over the life-time of the course they are attending. The bursary will be apportioned over the years of the course and paid to the student at the end of each academic year.
- 6.4 The Local Authority will also provide the care leaver with a weekly incentive payment during term time (£25 per week).
- 6.5 Additionally, the Local Authority will provide suitable accommodation

outside of term-time, or provide monies to the care leaver to secure suitable accommodation outside of term-time.

- 6.6 Having taken account of the young person's wishes, the Local Authority must be satisfied as to the character of the landlord or other provider and the suitability of the accommodation
- 6.7 Any additional discretionary payments made to individuals will be based on an individual assessed need basis. Examples of this include: monies to purchase course study materials and equipment; field trips; travel expenses; bond/rent in advance.
- 6.8 Setting up independent living money for the purchase of essential items, such as a fridge, cooker and bed can be held for the care leaver until they conclude their studies, or, if assessed as appropriate, they can access it prior to leaving for university.

## **7. FINANCIAL SCHEDULE/POSITION**

- 7.1 Appendix 1 indicates the range of financial support eligible to care leavers who are commencing Higher Education studies. As figures are based on the academic year 2018/19, these will be subject to change.

## **8. REPAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

- 8.1 The care leaver will not be required to start repaying their student loan to the student loan body until they are in full-time employment and receiving more than the minimum income 'repayment threshold', which is set by the government and is subject to change.
- 8.2 Should the care leaver decide to end their course early, they will still need to pay back any student loans that they have, and possibly any other bursaries or grants that they have received.

## **9. MONITORING, SUPPORT AND ENGAGEMENT**

- 9.1 Young people, having been cared for by the Local Authority, will have had on-going input to prepare them for the transition into adulthood, with a focus on key life skills such as money management, healthy living and cooking skills, self-care and presentation skills. Consequently it is anticipated they will be better placed to manage independent living.
- 9.2 As Corporate Parent, the Local Authority will continue to work on key life skills with young people throughout their Higher Education career. Therefore any financial and practical support for Higher Education will be

on the understanding that young people will remain in contact with the Local Authority and engage in the pathway planning process.

- 9.3 The pathway plan must set out the level and nature of the financial, emotional and practical support to be provided, and by whom, together with details of the accommodation the young person is to occupy, including an assessment of its suitability.
- 9.4 The pathway plan must also set out the arrangements for the care leaver and their personal advisor (PA) to keep in touch. The PA must have face-to-face contact with the care leaver. They may also encourage regular exchanges of communications via text, e-mails and telephone conversations, whichever being the most appropriate. The PA will also undertake regular visits to the accommodation where the young person lives.
- 9.5 Where the Local Authority has supported the young person to access suitable accommodation, they must arrange a review of the young person's pathway plan as soon as is practicable after the end of a period of 28 days beginning on the day on which the accommodation is first provided and determine at what intervals subsequent quarterly reviews will be carried out.
- 9.6 Where the young person is finding university life difficult, the Personal Advisor must take reasonable steps to meet with the young person and any professional person from the university to ensure the young person is supported to overcome those difficulties, in order to avoid disengagement and minimise the risk of the young person dropping off or being excluded from their course.
- 9.7 The Local Authority will also have a contingency plan in place in the event of the young person's pathway plan ceasing to be effective.
- 9.8 The young person will also have access to advocacy services throughout their time of study and whilst in higher education until they reach the age of 25yrs.

## **10. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION**

10.1 The authority will:

- ensure the effective application of this policy through support and monitoring
- monitor and update the procedures as required
- liaise with appropriate external agencies from time to time to ensure that the policy and procedures are kept up to date
- distribute the policy and procedures widely to staff

## **11. POLICY REVIEW**

- 11.1 The Local Authority is committed to the continuing development of the policy and will endeavor to maintain its accuracy and relevance. The policy will be reviewed in response to any proposed additions or amendments.

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## Appendix 1

Source	Description	Annual Amount	Repayable	Payment schedule
Student Finance Wales	Tuition Fees	£9,000	Yes	Paid directly to the University
Student Finance Wales	Welsh Assembly Learning Grant/ Help with living costs Grant	*£8,100	No	Apportioned termly to student
Student Finance Wales	Maintenance Loan	*£1,125	Yes	Apportioned termly to student
Student Finance Wales	Childcare Grant	*85% of childcare cost	No	Termly to student
Student Finance Wales	Parents Learning Allowance	*£1,557	No	Apportioned termly to student
Student Finance Wales	Adult Dependent Grant	*£2,732	No	Apportioned termly to student
Student Finance Wales	Disabled Student Allowance	Depending on circumstances as assessed by SFW.	No	Termly to student
BCBC	Bursary	£667**	No	Annual payment to student
BCBC	Incentive payment	£1,000	No	£25 per week for 40 weeks to student
Higher Education Institution	National Scholarship Programme	Variable dependent on HEI	No	Termly to student
BCBC	Vacation Accommodation	Discretionary depending on student requirement.	No	Direct to student or Landlord as deemed appropriate.

\*Maximum

\*\*based on apportionment of £2,000 over a three year course

All figures are based on Student Finance Wales 2019/20 entitlements and are dependent on the student meeting the specific eligibility criteria for each grant.

Non repayable elements of financing are subject to conditions. If you leave your course early or an overpayment has been made to you, a repayment will be required.