

Guidance for St David's Day Fund for young people who have experienced care

Purpose

The fund is to support young people who are or have been in local authority care to access opportunities that will lead them towards independent and successful lives.

Local authorities are corporate parents for children and young people in their care. We have heard from young people that they are often disadvantaged because they do not receive the same support to which their peers living with birth parents have access. That support includes guidance about education choices, funds to maintain social contact with peers and advice on living independently covering issues such as how to budget, pay bills and buy household goods.

This fund is to be available to young people. Local authorities should administer it flexibly and creatively to meet the needs of their young people in the same way that birth parents support their children, including the 'bank of mum and dad' role. Local authorities are encouraged to make care leavers and those approaching care leaver status aware of the fund through Pathway Plan discussions and review meetings.

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children has clearly stated that the fund is not to support the implementation of national strategies but is to go directly to care experienced young people in sums of money which can be used as a catalyst to advance independence, development and progression.

Through their corporate parenting boards (or equivalent) or leaving care teams, local authorities should promote the fund to their 16-25 population, encourage funding requests and work within the following set of guiding principles.

- Recognise and embrace the unique relationship between the child/young person and the local authority as their corporate parent. This relationship is not replicated anywhere else in the many relationships that exist between citizens and their local authority.
- Be responsible corporate parents by promoting their organisation as a family business, offering all care leavers opportunities for work experience and apprenticeships.
- Support and nurture young people's aspirations and help them to work towards achieving their goals so they can flourish and achieve.

There will be other sources of help for young people whether through financial assistance for example bursaries or other financial support for further and higher education, or through the provision of services,. This fund has not been established to duplicate these. Where there are already sources of financial support, these

should continue to be accessed. It is the intention that the new funding should be in addition to existing funding streams and schemes to ensure young people and care leavers can access or maintain opportunities.

Where care leavers request support to enable them to undertake an activity that will improve their wellbeing, maintain their independence or contribute to their development, local authorities should consider such requests on a case by case basis.

We are aware the Welsh Government has not prescribed in detail how local authorities should administer their funds. This is deliberate as we wish to give local authorities flexibility and discretion so that they can distribute the money to young people in a way that maximises opportunities and improves outcomes.

The fund is to be used flexibly and local authorities are encouraged to work in a co-productive way with the children and young people in their care concerning the fund's arrangements. Below are suggestions put forward by young people who are or have been in local authority care. This is not an exhaustive list but is designed to provide some ideas to stimulate thinking.

Education

- One off payments for course equipment
- Help with travel arrangements and expenses

Employment

- Guidance on accessing work experience, training and apprenticeship schemes
- Help to look for and prepare for work including interview coaching and interview clothes
- Support with travel expenses and arrangements to get to and from work
- Help to start own business
- Driving Lessons

Health and Well-Being

- Help for young people to access health services including GPs, dentists and opticians
- Financial help so that young people can maintain social contact with their peers and be at less risk of isolation and loneliness
- Financial support to enable care leavers to take part in hobbies, sport, leisure and extra curricular activities.
- Promotion of healthy lifestyles: learning, for example how to buy nutritious ingredients on a budget, cook healthy food and be physically active
- Peer networks to share experience and provide support

Housing

- Financial support for setting up home including bonds/deposits and advice on how to budget and pay bills
- Equipment and/or furniture for accommodation

Access to on-going advice and support

- Money for Passports, Birth Certificates or other forms of ID.
- Financial skills e.g. budgeting

How Welsh Government will administer the £1m fund

2017/18 and 2018/19

Welsh Government will provide each local authority with a grant apportioned according to Local Government Finance's Children in Social Services formula (this is a well used formula which takes into account a number of factors including child population and deprivation and has been agreed by local authorities). The scheme will be subject to the Welsh Government's Grants for Excellence requirements and procedures.

Local administration of the grant will be through each local authority head of children's service. The team allocated responsibility for the grant will be expected to set out how the fund will be administered and may decide priorities for its use depending on particular local needs of their care leaver populations. Local authorities are strongly encouraged to engage with young people and care leavers to agree priorities in a co-productive manner. Details such as whether the amount which can be requested is capped at an upper limit and the number of draws an individual can make on the fund in any given period are to be determined locally to allow organisations to respond flexibly and according to demand.

Six monthly reports from each local authority will be collated and submitted to the Welsh Government for consideration by the Ministerial Advisory Group. Grant offer letters will set out the reporting arrangements in more detail. Reports will demonstrate the effectiveness of the grant in supporting care leavers maintain independence and realise ambitions. Learning from the reports will be used to influence how the fund works in future years.

From 2019 onwards

It is recognised that it is good practice to move small grants to local authorities into the RSG and it is our intention to do so with this grant from April 2019. A system of

checks will be put in place to ensure the grant continues to be used for its original purpose and to maintain clear lines of accountability.

Eligibility

- Young people aged between 16-24 as set out in Section 5, Part 6 Code of Practice for Looked After and Accommodated Children **plus** those aged 21-24 who are not defined as being in education or training but require financial support to aid their transition towards independent living.
- The fund is accessible to those eligible as set out above from 1 April 2017.
- Young people to access the fund through their home local authority (this may be different to the local authority area in which they live). If a young person is leaving Wales for work, education purposes or similar, these young people should also access the fund through their home local authority.