Pocket Money and Savings Policy for Children and Young People in Care

Integrated Children's Services

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Document Owner	Caroline Smith, Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting
Version	3
Approved Date	15th March 2022
Review Date	March 2025

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Introduction

This policy sets out Kent County Council's minimum expectation regarding pocket money and savings for all children in care. This document could be used to clarify discussions with any carer/provider regarding these payments.

Section 1

Pocket Money

It is not expected that pocket money is paid to children under the age of 5-years old, as they can have occasional treats instead of pocket money. For all children and young people over the age of 5-years old, the table below sets out the minimum amount of pocket money carers/providers should give the children and young people in their care.

Age	Weekly minimum for pocket money
5–10 years	£5
11–15 years	£10
16–18 years	£15

Pocket money should be paid from the first week that a child comes into care, in line with this policy and recorded at the placement planning meeting, which is held within five days of placement. A signed copy of the placement planning meeting should be shared with foster carers/providers, so all are clear of the expectation for the payments of pocket money.

Kent County Council's in-house foster carers' maintenance payments are paid at a higher rate than the DFE guidelines and are inclusive of pocket money and money for one-off events such as birthdays, Christmas, and holidays.

For young people placed with an Independent Fostering Agency or in a residential setting, the social worker must discuss Kent County Council's expectation regarding pocket money with the provider when they have received the placement offers from our Total Placement Service.

The Total Placement Service will support these negotiations with the provider if there is an issue, and where needed the social worker will need to raise this as a possible additional cost signed off by their area Assistant Director. Confirmation of the arrangements should be included in writing within the placement planning meeting.

It is expected that carers give pocket money direct to the children and young people in their care and support them in its use. Pocket money can be given in one amount or spread over the week, provided the amount meets the minimum weekly expectation and is agreed between child/young person, carer/s, and social workers.

In exceptional circumstances it may not be appropriate to give children and young people money directly due to safeguarding concerns about how this will be used (e.g., drugs, financial exploitation by peers or other adults). If this is a concern, the foster carer/provider and social workers must agree a suitable alternative arrangement and record at the child/young person's placement planning meeting and child in care reviews as part of their care plan.

Foster carers/providers will provide toiletries, clothing and an agreed minimum mobile phone top up for older children and young people in their care, as agreed at the placement planning meeting and from the maintenance payment if applicable. If a child/young person wishes to spend more on these items however, they can do so from their own pocket money.

Kent County Council encourages foster carers to act as responsible parents to the children and young people they care for and in doing so accept that the use of extra pocket money as a reward for good behaviour or a reduction therefore for negative behaviour is something that can be considered.

Carers should always discuss this with the child or young person first and be clear as to why there is an increase or reduction. Carers should also always inform the child's social worker of their intention to do this so that this can be agreed as appropriate, monitored, and where needed mediated, to avoid any potential complaints or allegations of money being withheld without justification.

For children who are on respite, the expectation is that their main foster carer will continue to pay them their pocket money unless the respite care lasts longer than 1 week (7 days), at which point the respite carer will provide the child or young person with their pocket money.

Section 2

Young people living in other circumstances

Some young people, mostly older adolescents, may spend some time away from their placement because of being either in custody or in hospital due to physical or mental health needs.

Custody

For those young people who are remanded to a secure estate or who receive a custodial sentence, social workers are advised to read the Protocol for Joint Working between SCS & EHPS which deals with the legal status of these young people and clarifies Kent County Council's position regarding payments to them.

It is not Kent County Council's policy to automatically pay full pocket money to young people in custody. Social workers should assess the individual circumstances of the young person and agree with the Team Manager and the secure estate the amount of pocket money that will be paid.

It is recommended by secure estates that a minimum of £10.00 a week will give young people enough money for essential toiletries, telephone calls and to enable them to learn to budget and plan when considering purchasing other additional items, such as snacks and drinks for the week.

Where the young person in custody is receiving a regular payment from their parent(s) that exceeds the £10.00 a week, then Kent County Council will not contribute. Kent County Council will contribute where the young person is not receiving the minimum recommended amount. If during their time in custody the young person disengages in support and displays disruptive behaviours, the social worker should discuss with the secure estate whether the reduction of the weekly allowance would be a positive or negative response in challenging the young person's behaviour or would in fact make them more vulnerable.

Hospital

For those young people who are in hospital due to either physical or mental health needs, pocket money should still be paid, but in line with the health providers guidance. If during their time in hospital the young person does not need pocket money, it is reduced or not paid due to the health providers policies, then the outstanding amount if applicable should be paid into the young person's bank account set up by the carer/provider, so that the child/young person can use it later.

Section 3

Savings

All children and young people in the care of Kent County Council are entitled to have £10 per week saved on their behalf from their 14th week in care and continuing throughout their period being looked after. These savings are to support their transition into independence and should not be accessible to the young person until they reach 18.

For Kent's children and young people, the expectation is that they have at least two accounts:

1. A Bank Account which is set up in the child/young person's name by and at the choosing of their carer/provider, where the child/young person can save a small amount of their pocket money, Christmas, and birthday money for example, to encourage good savings habits and put towards extra things they would like.

   The child/young person should have access and be able to deposit and withdraw monies from this account (unless there are safeguarding concerns to them being able to access money).

   Other people would also be able to deposit money. These savings should be accessible to the young person throughout their time in care and not withheld until they are 18 years old.

2. A Child Trust Fund (CTF) or Junior ISA (JISA), where the child/young person can build long-term tax-free savings to help with the expenses of becoming independent, such as setting up their own home.

   For Children in Care, The Share Foundation (TSF), is a UK Charity that runs the CTF and JISA's on behalf of the Department for Education. Kent County Council's Management Information and Intelligence Unit are the Registered Contact and liaise with the Share Foundation to identify the CTF/set up the JISA.

   No-one can withdraw monies from the CTF/JISA, and the child/young person can only access monies in the account on and following their 18th birthday. Other people can deposit money.

For our unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, where their immigration status is unresolved, it is likely that the carer/provider will not be able to set up a bank account for pocket money savings, so the carers/providers and social workers will need to agree how and where they will save the young person's money. When they have been in care for 52 weeks, they will be eligible for a JISA as with all citizen children.

However, when the young person reaches 18, and wish to access their savings they will have to provide sufficient evidence of their identity (immigration status card or other legal documentation) to make deposits and withdrawals.

Initial Period in Care (0 – 13 weeks in care)

Due to complicating factors at the start of a child or young person's time in care, such as emergency care, changes in placement, and initial costs; carers/providers will receive the full maintenance payment (which includes £10 per week 'settling in' fee) and no monies, except a small amount from the child/young person's pocket money if appropriate, needs to be saved.

Carers/providers will set up a bank account in the child/young person's name by the time they have been in care for 13 weeks or at the latest by the second Chid in Care Review for the pocket money savings. (Unless there is a clear plan for the child or young person to return home imminently).

Carers/providers must provide the child/young person's social worker with the name, account number, and sort code of the bank account set up for the child/young person. The child/young persons' social worker must then complete the 'Record of child/young person's Bank Account, CTF/JISA' on the child's Liberi file.

The social worker will be asked to evidence they have done so and that the account details are current and correct in the Pre-Meeting Report and The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) will check this at the Review.

It is imperative that this is done because should the child/young person leave care before 52 weeks, the Local Authority will pay the accumulated savings into this bank account (see below 'savings between 14 and 52 weeks in care).

Savings between 14 and 52 weeks in care

From the child/young person's 14th week in care the carers/providers £10 per week 'Settling In' fee will stop, and £10 per week will be taken at the source of their maintenance payment and be held in a Kent County Council Account, until either a CTF or JISA is identified by The Share Foundation, following a child/young person's 52 weeks in care (see below 'savings from 52 weeks in care').

Should the child/young person leave care before 52 weeks, the amount of savings held in the KCC Account will be paid into the Bank Account set up in the first 13 weeks by the carer/provider. The bank account should always be in the child/young person's name, where the carer/provider is the Registered Contact, they must ensure they change the name to the adult now caring for the child/young person and share the account details with them. The child's social worker must check that this has been done and that the details held on the system are current and correct to avoid children having unclaimed savings.

Savings from 52 weeks in care

At 52 weeks, Kent County Council's Management Information and Intelligence Unit contact The Share Foundation to request that either a Junior ISA is set up, or the details of the

Child Trust Fund are located. For those children and young people who have a CTF, the Share Foundation will attempt to locate where and who holds that account after the request has been made by MII. This will usually be the child or young person's parent.

However, in cases where parent(s) cannot be located, or it is having been deemed by Kent County Council that there is no responsible parent who can manage the account, for example; through proceedings where a Care Order or Placement Order has been granted, then The Share Foundation are asked to take over management of the account.

The monies accrued in the KCC Account for those children/young people who have remained in care for 52 weeks will be paid into their JISA/CTF and £10 per week will continue to be paid into the JISA/CTF from the KCC Account every month, to give the child/young person's money good opportunity to gain interest.

Section 4

16- to 18-year-olds living in other accommodation

For young people aged 16-18-years old who either move out of foster care or are placed in supported accommodation after the age of 16 years, they will only receive pocket money and savings if Kent County Council are paying a maintenance fee to the host/provider,in which case the expectation is that the host/provider provides pocket money at £15 per week in line with this policy and the young person will continue to receive £10 per week savings into their CTF/JISA at the source of that maintenance payment.

For many 16- to 18-year-olds in these provisions, Kent County Council will not be paying a maintenance fee but will be paying Essential Living Allowance (ELA) equivalent. For those young people who are receiving this payment there is no expectation that they will receive additional pocket money and saving contributions.

Our Care Leavers policy sets out a minimum expectation for birthday gifts, gift vouchers or a cash payment that should be made to Care Leavers aged 16-18-years old.

For those young people aged 16-18-years old who are in a Supported Lodgings or semi-independent living accommodation and receive a maintenance payment direct from Kent County Council, then Kent County Council will pay the relevant birthday allowance. In what form this will be paid will be agreed between the child or young person and social worker and will depend on the child or young person's wishes along with the social worker assessing if there is any safeguarding issue regarding the young person having this amount of money.

Birthday Allowances	
Age	Amount
17th birthday	£30.00
18th birthday	£60.00

Section 5

Exceptions to saving in the Junior ISA and Child Trust Fund

It is likely to not be beneficial for children and young people in care who have a life limiting disability or illness to have their savings in a long-term investment account like the CTF/JISA. Their savings, therefore, where agreed with their social workers and carers/provider and recorded in the placement planning meeting and child in care reviews, can be paid into their bank account for pocket money savings and through which they can have regular access to as and when needed.

If a child or young person has a diagnosis where they have been assessed by medical experts as having less than six months left to live, the Junior ISA account can be accessed to provide funds to improve the child or young person's care in their last months. For this to happen the child's social worker must provide medical evidence and confirmation of the most appropriate person to access the funds to MII as the Registered Contacted for The Share Foundation.

Procedures for a child if they die before their 18th birthday

If a child or young person dies before they reach 18-years old and they have savings within their bank account or CTF/JISA, those monies become part of their estate and will become the property of whoever is entitled to that estate, usually the next of kin.

After authorisation by Kent County Council, the next of kin are asked to contact us to start the procedure for claiming the accounts. They will be asked to provide proof of identity and entitlement to the funds as well as a copy of the child/young death certificate.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority

The Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority may pay compensation to the victims of crimes of violence, including children and young people.

Compensation may be paid whether the child or young person is in care or living with their family. Applications are normally made by the victim, but in the case of a child or young person, may be made on their behalf by their social worker.

If the payment is offered and accepted, the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority will then normally put the money in an interest-earning deposit account in the child or young person's name, the payment to be paid to the child or young person together with all interest earned when they reach 18-years old. The Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority may consider requests to make payment into a Child Trust Fund or Junior ISA where the full value of the payment is protected until the child or young person is 18-years old.

The Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority may allow advances before the child or young person is 18-years old if these are needed for the child or young person's sole benefit, education, or welfare. It is expected however, that any request will be purposeful, supportive of the child or young person's aspirations and development and not simply a means of providing income support.

If the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority receive evidence that it would not be in the child or young person's best interests to be given the payment as a lump sum at 18-years old, they may consider the use of an annuity or a trust at that time. Some money may have been inherited and put in a trust fund for the child or young person.

The Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority are right to ask if it is in the child's best interests to be given a large lump sum payment from any account at 18-years old. Young people may want to spend it all at once and regret that afterwards. Whilst it is their money, to do with as they like, it is good practice to offer children and young people advice to encourage them to seek financial advice before their 18th birthday. This advice should start soon after their 17th birthday if not before.

Children and young people should be made aware of any money that is being saved for them. This money cannot usually be accessed until they are 18-years old, and when a young person approaches their 18th birthday, they or their foster carers should ask their child's social worker or a supervising social worker about getting the money out of any account opened in their name.

Section 6

Leaving Care and Care Leavers entitlements

When a child or young person reaches the age of 18-years old they are no longer legally a child in care and therefore there is no expectation for the foster carer to pay pocket money, savings or birthday payments post-18-years old and they should ensure that any standing orders and other forms of payments are stopped on the young person's 18th birthday.

It is important to remember that if a young person is remaining with a carer post- 18-years old under a staying put arrangement that the carer ensures that appropriate financial arrangements are in place and agreed before the young person's 18th birthday. Social Workers and Personal Advisors should ensure they follow the guidance within the Staying Put Policy.

When a young person leaves care, they get help about where and how to live more independently and their Personal Advisor will help them understand what financial help they can get such as personal allowances, benefits, travel and housing costs whilst they are studying, educational grants for books, setting-up home grants and emergency payments in times of crisis. This should also include advice and support about getting the money that has been saved for them.