

## The Care Leavers' Foundation

### Framework and Guidance Document

## SECTION 1 - GRANTS FRAMEWORK

### 1.1 Introduction to the Trust Fund

The Care Leavers' Foundation Trust Fund exists to provide young people who have been in care with opportunities and 'second chances'. It aims to enhance the life chances of care leavers and reduce their experience of social exclusion. Cash grants will be made where the applicant meets the criteria set out in this document and funds are available to meet the request.

The Care Leavers' Foundation recognises that many young adults leave care having been denied basic rights as children including the right to education, the right to a safe and secure home and the right to live without fear. Many young people will have learned to cope with life by the time they leave care, although most will have poor self-esteem and significantly less developed social skills than their counterparts in the wider population, as well as education and knowledge gaps which are an inevitable outcome of disrupted young lives and multiple placement moves. The Care Leavers' Foundation does not believe that being 'able to cope' is a good enough aspiration for our care leavers and will seek to provide funds to applicants where such provision is likely to contribute to that individual's continued personal development and improve their quality of life in ways which are important to them.

### 1.2 Governing Principles

- ✦ decisions about awards will demonstrably contain aspects of 'good parenting'
- ✦ applicants will need to demonstrate how the request, if funded, would empower them to move forward in their life, however small or large the step
- ✦ people make mistakes, and an applicant will not be debarred from making further applications to the fund if they have failed to achieve the benefits anticipated from earlier award(s). The Foundation will not however allow itself to become a bottomless rescue fund for any one individual or individuals
- ✦ grants will be linked to allowing people dignity and aspiration and will not be linked to the kind of low expectations traditionally assigned to the care leaving population
- ✦ the Foundation may opt to research and provide information about other sources of funding and will aim not to give out money where other forms of statutory or non-statutory funding is available to meet the same need, and where an application is rejected for this reason, will endeavour to provide appropriate information to the applicant about alternative sources of support
- ✦ all decisions will be made against the ethical objectives of the Foundation and against any criteria currently in force

### 1.3 Eligibility

Grant applications will be accepted from care leavers aged 18 – 29, although strong preference is given to those age 21 and over. As a result of changes in legislation and guidance since the Foundation was established there is now a lot more support available to care leavers age 18-21 and we will generally expect that local authorities are fully meeting their duties and obligations within the spirit of the relevant Guidance and are not looking to small charities as a 'first resource' where those obligations exist.

### 1.4 Criteria for Payments

There is no limit to the number of applications an individual can make to the Trust Fund. An application identical to one which has already been turned down will not normally be considered, unless a) the reason for non-payment was due to lack of funds or b) the original application was referred for further details.

The maximum single award is currently £400.00 and there will be a maximum limit of £400.00 in a twelve month period payable to any individual, whether in stage payments or as a result of separate applications. An exception to this upper limit may be made in the case of students who are receiving term time top up payments on a regular basis and the Foundation will keep limits under constant review as our ambition is to be able to make larger grants when our funds increase.

Applications which are eligible under one of the following headings will be considered.

- ✦ Household, major or minor – hardware, furnishings etc.
- ✦ Emergency living expenses
- ✦ Education – equipment, books, term time top up etc.
- ✦ Training, enterprise & employment
- ✦ Exceptional medical needs, therapy, therapeutic activities
- ✦ Other needs as may arise and be considered by the committee to fall within the principals of the Trust Fund.

### 1.5 Decision Making

The full management committee of The Care Leavers' Foundation Trust Fund meet four times a year to decide on outstanding applications and review awards already made. Grant applications which meet straightforward criteria within the normal expected panel of giving will be dealt with by a single Trustee or nominated Officer of the charity on a more frequent basis where resources permit. Non-urgent requests for payment will be dealt within the three month limit, however it is recognised that many requests will by their nature require a much more rapid decision making and payment process. It is anticipated therefore that many decisions will be made more rapidly.

- ✦ Grant will not be accepted other than on a fully completed application form.
- ✦ Where there is a demonstrably urgent need this requirement may be waived in exceptional circumstances.
- ✦ In cases of repeat student applications a full application will not need to be resubmitted on each occasion and in some other cases of repeat requests the requirement for a full application may be waived.
- ✦ Electronic means of communication including telephone, facsimile and email will be accepted methods of reaching agreement between Trustees.

## 1.6 Payments

The management committee will decide with the applicant how the money is to be paid. This will normally be by direct electronic transfer into a specified bank account. In some instances we may agree to make a payment straight to the supplier or to another nominated third party. Where the applicant requests other payment methods, such a request will be considered according to individual circumstances.

## 1.7 Monitoring and Evaluation

Applicants are asked to tick a box on the application form indicating whether they are willing to take part in follow up questionnaires or other forms of evaluation. According to available resources the Foundation may seek to gather such information from willing applicants to assist us with fundraising and to ensure the criteria for grants continue to meet the patterns of need presented by the care leaver population.

## 1.8 Information, Application & Confidentiality

- ✎ A list of grants made by the Trust Fund and a summary of outcomes based on evaluation carried out will be published from time to time. It will not give details of specific individuals. This document is available to anyone with a legitimate interest in the Trust Fund.
- ✎ All personal information submitted by applicants and referees will be held by the trustees in complete confidence and made available only as necessary for the administration of the business of the Trust Fund to members of the management committee and advisors as appointed by the trustees.
- ✎ Application forms are available from the address at the end of this document or can be downloaded at [www.thecareleaversfoudnation.org](http://www.thecareleaversfoudnation.org) Any eligible person, or their representative can receive these details.

## 1.9 Contact

Registered Address

The Care Leavers' Foundation

**PO Box 202 . BALA . LL23 7ZB**

Tel. 01678 540 598

Email [applications@brynmelyngroupfoundation.org](mailto:applications@brynmelyngroupfoundation.org)

Send Grant Applications to:

Unit 2, Pinkers Court, Briarlands Office Park, Gloucester Road, Rudgey, BRISTOL, BS35 3QH

## SECTION 2 – APPLICATION GUIDANCE

**2.1 Application Form** The Guidance in this section takes you through the application form and how to complete it.

### FRONT PAGE

**Your Name:** Enter your name as you normally like to be called

**Date of Application:** Enter the date you are completing or posting the form

**Local Authority Last Looked After:** even if it is a long time ago please tell us which local authority was responsible for your care when you left care

**Office use only:** leave this section blank

### CONTACT DETAILS

**Contact Details:** Please give us your full name and address, any previous names you have been known by and include your postcode, and email address if you have one.

### DETAILS OF APPLICATION

**Amount Requested:** tell us how much money you need

**Please explain what the money be used for:** tell us exactly what are you going to do with the money – what is it you need to buy. If it is more than one thing break down the items you need giving an approximate cost for each.

**And explain how it will help your current situation:** you have already told us what you need, in this section please explain how having help with this item or items will improve your life.

**Category:** tick the box that best describes the type of help you are applying for. You can tick more than one box if you need to. This is for monitoring purposes only.

**Previous payments:** It is important you tell us about any other help you are getting or hoping to get towards the thing you are applying for. Or if you have had help from the Foundation before with this or another item. Getting other help, or coming back to us for a second or third time will not affect your chance of being successful.

### YOUR INCOME

**Please tell us about your income:** you must tell us the total amount of money you have coming into your household each week or month including wages, benefits, help from your leaving care team, student loans, tax credits, child support or maintenance payments and any other income. Your household is you and everyone that lives with you.

### YOUR TIME IN CARE

**Please tell us how long you were in care:** we don't need you to tell us a lot of sensitive information or disclose deeply personal details. We need to know how long you were in care for and at what age you left care/type of accommodation on leaving etc. Give us a bit of an idea of what your experience in care was like but don't tell us anything you don't want to share.

**Reference 1 and Reference 2:** we don't always follow up references if you have given us all the information we need, but we do need details of two people who can confirm who you are, and verify your time in care and/or current situation if necessary. You need to be happy for us to discuss your grant application with the people you name if we need to. We might copy the reply we send to you to one of your referees if we need them to help sort something out.

### **YOUR REPRESENTATIVE**

If you didn't feel like you could fill in the form yourself you might have asked someone else to fill it in for you. If this is what happened and you want us to reply to them and not to you they should fill in this section.

### **HOW WILL WE KNOW THE MONEY HELPED YOU?**

Sometimes we might want to find out whether the money helped, either soon after you receive the grant, or maybe a year later. Tell us here how we will know it helped, and tick the box if you would be willing to talk to us about it sometime in the future. You don't have to say yes! It won't affect your application.

### **PAYMENT**

Most payments are made by direct bank transfer. If you don't have a bank account or you need the money paid in a different way for any reason please tell us about that here. For example if you have a big overdraft in your bank the money we put in might all disappear paying that debt and you won't be able to use it for the intended purpose.

### **CONTINUATION SHEET**

More information: there is plenty of space here for you to tell us anything else you would like us to know, or carry on with any answers that you couldn't fit into their own boxes.

### **DECLARATION**

Sign and date: by signing your form you are confirming that the information you have given us is true.

### **DECISION OF COMMITTEE**

You don't need to put anything on this page. This is where we will make our notes about your application and our decision.

All personal information is treated in the strictest confidence and used only for the purpose of making a decision about your grant application. We may extract some details of the types of application received to report on our grant-making and analyse trends and needs. Any information extracted in this way will be completely anonymous.

**2.2 Specific Guidance** There are certain types of application that we receive frequently which often follow a similar pattern. The information below outlines the things we will consider in such applications and the kinds of question we may need to ask you if you have not covered all of these things in your application. We have also suggested some places to look to find out about other sources of help and entitlement.

#### FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Local Authorities have significant duties placed upon them to support care leavers in their pathways through education. We will need to be sure that your local authority has fulfilled all of its duties in relation to financial support and advised you fully as to your entitlements before we can make any grant.

It may be that in addition to these supports you still need a bit of extra help in order to complete your course.

**Higher Education Bursary** The HE Bursary of £2000 is payable by the local authority to all care leavers who commence a course of Higher Education before they are 25. The way in which this is paid should be negotiated and agreed with you to meet your individual needs.

**Student Loan** Your loan from the Student Finance Company is designed to cover your course fees and most of your living expenses at University. You should have received full advice about how to apply for this well in advance of starting your course.

**Help in the Holidays** Your leaving care team must pay the cost of your accommodation during the long university holidays in addition to the HE Bursary. Many LC teams will offer additional support which might take the form of a book grant or a laptop. Ensure that you are clear how your leaving care is planning to support you well before you start your first university term.

**Additional support from your university** Each university has different levels of additional support available through Bursaries, Care Leaver funds, Vulnerable Student funds or Hardship funds. You should ensure that you have received full information about any such funds that might be available to you before you apply to us. This information is normally available through Student Support Services. Universities that have achieved the Buttle Charter Mark have been inspected to meet certain standards in being aware of, and supporting, their care leaver students.

**Fees and support for Further Education** Your leaving care worker should fully discuss with you the support you are entitled to receive to help you stay in college or return to education. Even if you have 'left care' and your case was closed when you were 21, you can return your leaving care team at any time before your 25<sup>th</sup> birthday if you are thinking about getting back into education. Your leaving care team must advise and support you to find the course that is right for you, apply to college and make a plan to enable you to finance yourself whilst at college. The kind of support you get, which might include a weekly allowance or incentive payment, will be different in each local authority.

**Course Fees** If you have not previously completed a Level 2 or Level 3 qualification or equivalent qualification you will not be charged fees for the course. If you commence a course of eligible Further Education at the age of 24+ you will be eligible for an FE loan which is run in a similar way to the loans for HE degree courses. If you take out a 24+ loan you will not have to commence repayments until your income rises above the set threshold. If you take out a 24+ FE loan and subsequently go on to complete a full degree course your original loan is written off and you do not have to repay this.

Full details can be found in the [Skills Funding Agency FUNDING RULES 2013](#) document. You will also find full details of current arrangements for Additional Learning Support and Discretionary Learning Support in the Funding Rules guide.

#### ESSENTIAL HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

Most of our grants for household essentials are directed at care leavers age 21+ who are likely to have moved a number of times since they were first placed in independent accommodation. Before awarding money for this purpose we also need to be sure that the local authority that last looked after you has fully discharged its responsibilities to you. This includes ensuring you are in suitable accommodation when you first leave care and that you are provided with a leaving care grant, often called a setting up home grant, when you move into your first unfurnished tenancy. There is no law that says how much leaving care grant you get, but the Children's Minister in England wrote to all Directors of Children's Services in October 2012 recommending that £2,000 is the minimum amount they should be paying. When a Minister writes to Directors they should take some notice of what he says.

Our current position with grants for household items is that for any applicants aged 18 – 20 we would only make a grant in very special circumstances as it is the responsibility of your local authority to ensure that you have all the essential things that you need for your new home. Older care leavers who might never have received a leaving care grant (for example because you went away to university when you left care or you spent your first few years in hostels or furnished accommodation and are only just getting your first permanent flat now) should also approach their leaving care team to ensure they receive their one off leaving care grant. If you have never received this one off payment, even if you are a little bit older now, most local authorities will release this to you as a matter of good practice if you ask for it.

The Foundation will need to satisfy itself that you have received all that you are entitled to and that you have had discussion with your leaving care worker about doing a little bit more for you if you need 'second time around' help with major household items. The law is not clear on this but Guidance strongly suggests that local authorities should recognise that care leavers may need help more than once to purchase essential items. If you send as much information as you can about the support you have already received from your local authority with setting up home. First time or second time around, this will help us deal with your application more quickly.

#### JOB INTERVIEWS TRAVEL AND CLOTHING COSTS

If you are thinking of applying for a grant to help with the cost of purchasing clothes for interview or travel to interview, job trial, or other work related opportunities set up for you by your Job Centre Plus, please note that every Job Centre Plus does have a scheme to support these kinds of expenses. Eligibility and exactly what is covered varies from one area to another. Before you send us your application please ensure you have found out what is available to you locally and include full details of why the request can't be funded through JCP if applicable.

#### DEBT, RENT ARREARS, UTILITIES

Often we receive applications from care leavers who are in a great deal of debt. As a small fund we will only ever be able to make a very small contribution towards these large payments. Before applying to us you should contact the utility company trust fund associated with your energy supplier. If you are eligible for support from one of these funds they will be able to provide much more help than we can and will usually pay off the whole amount owed. You can ask them to look at help with other debts too in addition to gas, electricity and water charge, such as rent arrears.