

## Guidance Document for the Implementation of the Standardised Aftercare Allowance

Following extensive consultation Tusla has introduced a Standardised National Aftercare Allowance for young people who have been in care for 12 months on their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday or for 12 consecutive months prior to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. This weekly standardised allowance of €300 per week ensures equality for all care leavers engaged in training and education.

This allowance is the first step in a phased development of aftercare services and will provide certainty and consistency for care leavers for the first time. Each care leaver as part of their leaving and aftercare planning will have an Individual Financial Support Plan. This plan forms part of an assessment of need which takes account of all sources of financial support from Tusla, the Department of Education, the Department of Social Protection and the Department of the Environment.

All young people leaving care who have been in care for 12 months on their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday or for 12 consecutive months prior to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday are eligible for an aftercare service. Financial support is just one element of this service. Advice, guidance, support and signposting are other key elements and these supports are available to all care leavers. For those young people who are not in training or education aftercare services have a key role in providing support to them in liaising with the relevant departments and agencies in accessing financial assistance, employment opportunities, training or supporting them to return to education.

The transition to independent adulthood can be challenging for many young people and a key factor in achieving success is ensuring that assessment, preparation and planning for leaving care begins in the years prior to leaving care and continues as part of the care planning process. This work is based on

collaboration with the young person, their carers and partner agencies to generate an aftercare plan that is specific to the individual young person's needs.

The introduction of this Aftercare Allowance is a step in demonstrating Tusla's commitment to an Aftercare Service that offers consistent supports to ensure that young people leaving care and aftercare reach their potential in adult life.

### **Frequently Asked Questions: -**

These FAQ's relate only to the introduction of the standardised Aftercare Allowance.

The provision of Aftercare Services is a shared responsibility between Tusla and partner agencies. Financial support for young adults can come from various sources and/or agencies. All of these provisions are considered within the Individual Aftercare Financial Support Plan.

#### **1. How is the Aftercare Allowance determined?**

Every young person as part of their preparation for leaving care will have an Individual Financial Support Plan. This plan will be completed in advance of the young person turning 18 years of age. The plan takes account of all financial supports available to care leavers and is reviewed as part of aftercare planning.

#### **2. What is an Individual Aftercare Financial Support Plan?**

An Individual Aftercare Financial Support Plan is an assessment of the financial needs of a young person. It is a standardised tool to assist in identifying all the financial support requirements for each young person. The Individual Financial Support will document all financial supports available to care leavers and financial supports required.

It is expected that all care leavers will have access to an income of a minimum allowance of €300 per week. The €300 may be a combined amount from other departments/ agencies or may be paid in full or partly by Tusla.

### **3. Who completes the Individual Aftercare Financial Support Plan?**

The young person will meet with their Aftercare Worker, Social Worker, and Carer/staff to complete the Individual Aftercare Financial Support Plan. This process is co-ordinated, finalised and submitted by the Aftercare Worker to the Aftercare Coordinator.

### **4. How much is the Aftercare Allowance?**

A minimum allowance of €300 per week is payable to each care leaver who is in training or education. The €300 may be a combined amount from other departments/ agencies or may be paid in full or partly by Tusla.

### **5. What happens if the Aftercare Allowance currently paid exceeds/ is less than €300?**

The current allowance will be reviewed and assessed using the Individual Aftercare Financial Support Plan in line with the new standardised rate of allowance of €300 per week.

### **6. Is there capacity for discretionary payments?**

The Individual Aftercare Financial Support Plan determines the individual requirements of each care leaver. The assessment of financial need allows for an element of discretion to meet the needs of those young people who require additional financial support. Consideration of discretionary payments will be made in consultation within the local area and approved by the Area Manager for that area.

### **7. Who is the Aftercare Allowance payable to?**

Where a young adult is in education/training at 18 years of age and remains in placement, the Aftercare Allowance is payable to the Foster Carer(s) or Supported Lodgings provider. Where a young adult continues with education/training and is in independent living, the Aftercare Allowance is payable directly to the young adult.

For those young adults who are not in education/training at 18 years, aftercare services will support them in accessing the relevant financial support they are eligible for from Department of Social Protection, Department of Environment etc..

## **8. Can the Aftercare Allowance be divided between the carer and the young adult?**

Aftercare planning aims to ensure that young people are prepared for independent living and are supporting in becoming self-sufficient and responsible adults. Young people must be supported in developing the necessary skills and should be given a level of autonomy and responsibility for the management of the aftercare allowance. This should be a fundamental consideration in every financial planning process between the aftercare worker, carer and young person. A structure for managing this payment should be agreed by all parties.

## **9. When does the Aftercare Allowance cease to be paid?**

The Aftercare Allowance continues to be paid up to the age of 21 years provided the young adult is engaging in education/training. Consideration may be given to supporting a further 2 years if a clear education/training pathway is evidenced.

Should you have any further queries, please contact your local social work department / aftercare service.

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