

Activity **FUNd** for looked after children

Guidance notes January 2010



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Summary of the Activity FUNd

The Activity FUNd is an exciting Care Matters initiative which is aimed at promoting health, education, social inclusion and well-being of Lambeth children looked after (CLA) by providing additional and personalised resources. The Activity FUNd is aimed at narrowing the gap between CLA and their peers in terms of the full range of Every Child Matters outcomes. In order to support better prevention and early intervention access to activities should be provided at the earliest opportunity to children looked after who are:

- At risk of social exclusion
- At risk of not reaching the expected national standards of attainment
- In need of targeted social intervention to improve outcomes
- Would benefit from engagement in out of school activities to promote well-being and improve life chances

The Activity FUNd recognises the significant role that out of school learning opportunities provides to children looked after and it aims to increase support for children to engage in positive leisure and out of school activities. A preliminary

discussion with the child, care provider and social worker will ascertain the child's interests and identify a plan of proposed engagement which is tailored around the individual needs of the child. Activities will be recorded in

the child's PEP and care plan and reviewed in the CLA statutory review and PEP meetings. The allowance is not intended to replace, duplicate or substitute services or support that Lambeth Council, schools, carers, practitioners or other universal services already provide.

The Activity FUNd facilitates a number of requirements set out in the White Paper: Time for Change, in particular the funding supports the implementation of the Lambeth Pledge for children looked after and the role of the Children in Care Council in listening to and improving wider service provision for Lambeth children looked after.

Activity FUNd: January - March 2010

Eligible CLA have a budget of up to £125 per child. Applications for funding must be received by the Corporate Parenting Team (CPT) by 20 March 2010. Please note that unspent money cannot be carried over into the next financial year.

Activity FUNd: April 2010 - March 2011

Eligible CLA have a budget of up to £500 per child. Applications for funding must be received by the

CPT by 01 March 2011. Social workers do not need to apply for the whole £500 at one time; it is recommended that they apply for individual amounts of support as and when they are required, as long as these are identified in the child's personal education plan (PEP).

Use of the Activity FUNd

The funding is intended to pay for activities or resources that support the learning and development of children looked after, that a parent (rather than a school, local authority, or other service) would be expected to fund for a child who was not looked after.

Examples of the types of activities which the Activity FUNd may finance include:

- Wider positive activities that will benefit the child or young person's learning and development
- Out of school learning and development that will build the child's self esteem and confidence, creativity and intellectual development

- Learning resources that the local authority does not expect to be covered by foster carer allowance, residential home fees or the Lambeth Community College (virtual school)
- Positive engagement targeted at improving educational attainment and children's outcomes

Multiple applications for the Activity FUNd can be made within the financial year up to the value of £500.

Eligible children and young people have individual needs and varying abilities therefore all applications for funding will be considered on an individual basis and agreed by the CPT and the Head of Service.

Eligibility:

The Activity FUNd is for -

Children looked after by Lambeth aged 5 to 16 years who have been in care for a minimum of 3 months and where a decision is in place that they will remain in care.

The Activity FUNd will provide finance up to the young person's 17th birthday.

What are the benefits of the Activity FUNd for children looked after?

The funding takes into account the significant role out-of-school learning activities can play in improving children's wider learning, development and well-being.

Engagement in positive out of school activities may build resiliency, increase life chances for Lambeth children looked after and aim to narrow the gap between children looked after and their peers in terms of the Every Child Matters outcomes.

Links with the child's care plan and Personal Education Plan (PEP)

The chosen activities funded through the Activity FUNd must form a key part of the care planning process and be documented within the care plan and PEP. Children must be supported to actively and meaningfully participate and contribute their wishes, feelings and experiences to this review process.

The statutory review and PEP review meetings will monitor the child's engagement and progress within their chosen activities and will ensure the child's views, wishes and feelings are obtained.

An up to date PEP will record and monitor the child's involvement in projects and record achievements and challenges. Both PEP's and care plans will be regularly reviewed to monitor the effectiveness of engagement of the Activity FUNd.

The Activity FUNd provides a good opportunity to seek the views and interests of children and engage them in their own learning and development. The social worker will communicate directly with the child or young person to ascertain their personal interests when deciding how the Activity FUNd should be spent and the foster carer will be required to support the child to engage and attend their nominated activity.

Statutory guidance on the care planning process highlights that the views, wishes and feelings of children looked after must be taken into account in the care planning and review process. By linking the Activity FUNd to the child's care plan we will ensure that the views of the child are represented.

Role of the social worker

In partnership with children, social workers and foster carers are best placed to identify the child's individual needs and ascertain their

key interests. Children and social workers may then identify what types of activity and provision would best support the child's learning and development.

It is the responsibility of the social worker to complete an Activity FUNd request form and care package form and sent to the CPT for approval.

The Social Worker can access the Participation Officer for children looked after (0207 926 7084) who can provide additional support to develop an engagement plan for harder to reach children looked after, including those with disabilities, to identify appropriate activities and support mechanisms for each individual child/young person where necessary.

Role of the foster carer / parent / residential unit

Once a child has discussed with their social worker and foster carer what activities they would like to apply for. It is the role of the foster carer/parent/residential unit to actively identify the providers of these activities, and ensure that this is accessible to where the child is residing.

If a foster carer is having difficulty finding the chosen activity locally they can contact the Participation Officer for children looked after on 0207 926 7084 who can provide additional support to identify appropriate activities in a local area.

It is very important that the foster carer/parent/residential unit makes every effort to support the child to access and attend funded activities. This may include arranging transport to and from the venue, having reminders on the calendar, actively praising and encouraging the child for their participation.

The foster carer's good judgement will be required to ensure all funded projects and activities are safe and appropriate for the child's age and ability.

How payment is made

On approval the foster carers/care providers will be paid direct into their bank account, care providers may pay for activities / equipment in advance and then be reimbursed via payment direct into their bank account or wait until payment has been received.

Carers and social workers will be required to provide all receipts for audit purposes.

What happens next?

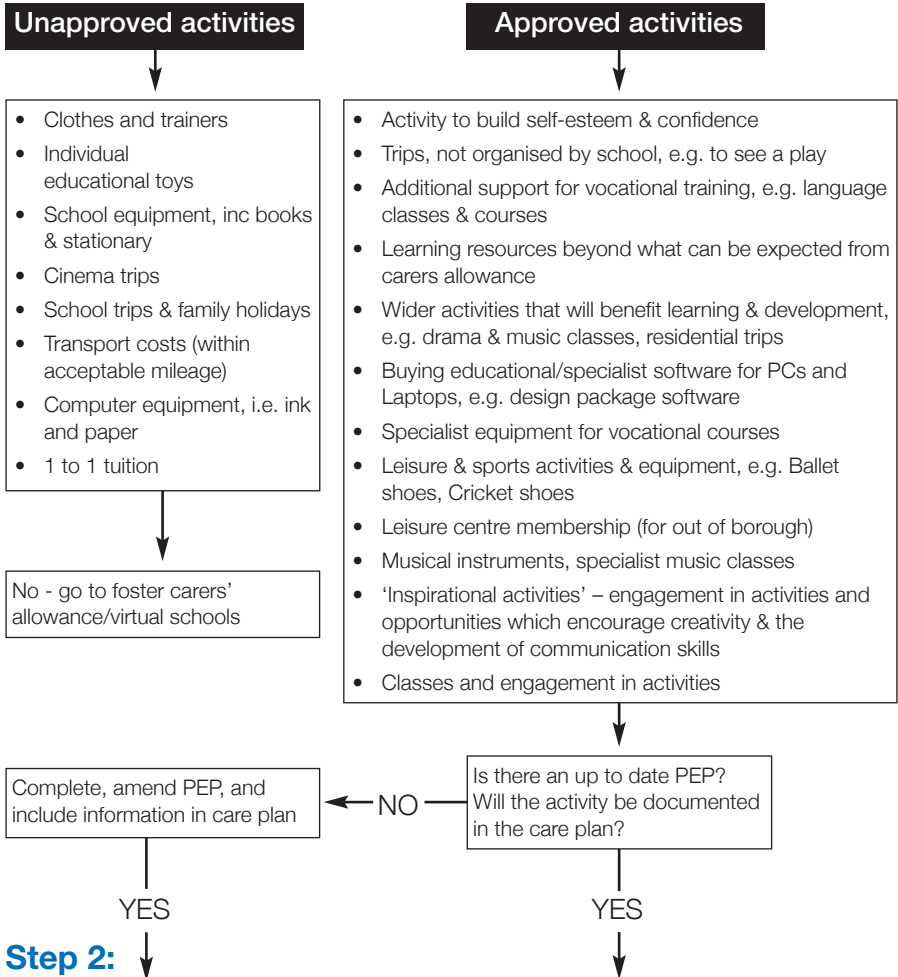
A request form and care package form will need to be completed by the social worker. The request form and care package form are to be sent to the CPT for approval, this will involve checking the proposed activity meets with the Activity FUNd criteria. On approval the CPT will send the request form and care package form to the Head of Service for authorisation and the CPT will inform all parties about the application outcome. A nominated Finance Administrator will manage the administration and monitoring of the allowance.

Monitoring

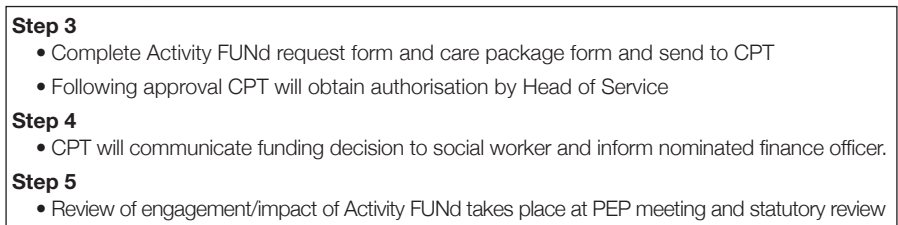
The effectiveness of the Activity FUNd will be reviewed in the child's statutory review and monitored at the child's PEP review. The CPT will evaluate all Activity FUNd activities on a quarterly basis with participating children looked after.

Overview of process for accessing the Activity FUNd for eligible children & young people

Step 1: IS THE REQUEST FOR?



Step 2:



Activity FUNd : Duties for Social Work staff and social care practitioners

Step 1

Is the child eligible for the Activity FUNd?

Step 2

Hold a discussion with the child and care provider to discuss the child's interests and identify an activity. Discuss and agree roles & responsibilities of both the child and care provider

Step 3

Check the proposed activity meets with Activity FUNd criteria as defined in the 'overview process' chart. Contact the CPT for clarification or guidance

Step 4

Support the child and care provider to identify a suitable service provider, obtain proposed activity timescales, provider details and costs (information required for completion of the request form)

Step 5

Social Worker completes an Activity FUNd request form and care package form and sends these to the Participation Officer within the CPT for agreement. The CPT will inform the child's IRO (Independent Review Officer) of an application.

Step 6

On agreement, the CPT will send the Activity FUNd request and care package forms to the Head of Service for authorisation. The CPT will notify the social worker of all application outcomes.

Step 7

The social worker completes and/or updates the child's PEP and records proposed project/activity engagement.

Step 8

The CPT will send the Activity FUNd request form and care package form to the Business Support Team for processing. Funds will be transferred to the care provider's bank account

Step 9

The Business Support Team will record and monitor payments and maintain a spreadsheet for the child

It is a requirement that all Activity FUNd activity is recorded and monitored in the child's care plan and PEP.

Activity FUNd: Actions for Care Providers, including Foster Carers, IFA's and Specialist Providers

Step 1

A discussion is held between the child and social worker to ascertain the child's interests and identify a project/activity. Check this proposed activity meet with Activity FUNd criteria.

Step 2

Research a suitable activity provider in the local area with the child. The Participation Officer within the CPT can provide support finding suitable activities

Step 3

Once an activity provider has been sourced obtain activity/project details and inform the social worker. The social worker will complete an Activity FUNd request form and care package form which will require agreement by the CPT and authorisation by the Head of Service. Please note the authorisation process may take up to 10-days.

Step 4

Following authorisation all funds will be processed by a nominated finance officer. Lambeth foster carers will have money deposited direct in to their bank account and IFA and specialist providers will be requested to raise an invoice.

Step 5

Agree a plan of action with the child i.e. discuss transport arrangements and specific support needs. It is recommended that the care provider accompany the child to attend initial visits. Ensure the Activity FUNd is monitored at the child's statutory review and discussed with the supervising social worker.

Step 6

Provide regular feedback to the social worker on the child attendance and engagement.

Step 7

Request proof of purchase from the activity provider and send original receipts/invoices to the nominated Finance Officer in the free-post envelope provided. It is advised that you make copies of all receipts sent.

Step 8

The child's social worker will evaluate the activity in consultation with the child/care provider. The effectiveness of the activity will be reviewed in the child's statutory review and through a PEP review.

Useful Contact details:

Corporate Parenting Team

9th Floor International House,
6 Canterbury Crescent,
Brixton, SW9 7QE

Participation Officer 020 926 7084

Business Support Team Finance Officer 020 926 5445

To access an Activity
FUNd request form
contact the CPT or search
www.g2k.org.uk