



Children's Safeguarding and Family Help

Providing services under section 17

CONTENTS

1.	Legal framework	2
2.	Eligibility	2
3.	Assessment	2
4.	Types of assistance	
	4.1 Assistance in kind	3
	4.2 Assistance in cash	3
5.	Use of section 17 funds	
	5.1 Subsistence	3
	5.2 Clothing, utilities and household items	4
	5.3 Direct work with children	4
	5.4 Transport	4
	5.5 Supporting kinship carers	4
	5.6 Accommodation	5
	5.7 Holidays and school trips	6
	5.8 Services for parents and carers	6
	5.9 Day care and nursery provision	6
	5.10 Young people aged 16/17	7
	5.11 Asylum seeking families	7
	5.12 Payments on behalf of other local authorities	7
6.	Procedures	
	6.1 Authorisation and budget projection	8
	6.2 Completing finance forms	8

Section 17 support

1. Legal framework

- Under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, local authorities have a duty to provide services to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need, and assist families to care for children at home.
- Support under section 17 can be given in kind (for example providing services or equipment) or in exceptional circumstances, in cash. Support can be offered to the child or to any other person in their family if the support will contribute to the child's wellbeing.
- It is possible to attach conditions to payments that require families to either contribute towards the cost of services or for repayment of any support or financial assistance provided, unless the family is in receipt of benefits. When deciding on provision of services or calculating financial assistance, the family's means should be taken into account.

2. Eligibility

Services and assistance can only be provided if an assessment shows that the child is in need. An assessment should be carried out to:

1. identify the child's developmental needs,
2. establish whether the child is a child in need and eligible for services from Children's Safeguarding and Social Work services (CSFH), and
3. decide what the most appropriate services are to meet the child's needs.

Social workers should refer to the *Assessments policy* for guidance on carrying out assessments and developing and reviewing plans. [Assessments
..\Assessment\Assessment policy and practice guidance.doc](#)

3. Assessment

- Assessment for financial assistance under section 17 should be an integral part of an overall assessment of the child's developmental needs. Details of any assistance to be provided should be recorded in the child's plan, stating how it will contribute towards meeting the child's identified needs and improving outcomes for the child.

Section 17 support

- Assessment should establish whether the family are receiving all benefits or tax credit entitlements, and social workers should help families in making any claims for any benefits or tax credits that they are entitled to.
- In some cases, it may be more appropriate for families to be referred to another agency or organisation for support and assistance. Social workers should consider all community resources available and advise families on accessing resources, making appropriate referrals by e-CAF. Social workers should also consider applying to charities on behalf of families for funding.
- Where the child has complex needs requiring a detailed package of support, social workers should approach the Resources services for advice on suitable resources and suppliers.
- Assessment should consider the child's immediate needs as well as any on-going need for support. On-going financial support should be calculated over a period of 3 months and as part of the general 6 month review of the child's plan during the child in need review process.

4. Types of assistance

4.1 Assistance in kind

- Assistance in kind is where CSFH buys in services, vouchers or items from suppliers on behalf of service users. Assistance in kind should be used wherever possible, and cash should only be given to families in emergencies or where assistance can only be provided in cash (see below).
- Assistance in kind can be in the form of local orders (so service users can buy furniture, household items, safety and baby equipment from a range of suppliers), travel warrants for rail travel, or food vouchers for. Assistance in kind can also cover other resources and services such as provision of day care or playschemes.

4.2 Assistance in cash

This should only be used in exceptional circumstances when an immediate need is identified and/or assistance can only be made by making a payment in cash or directly into the service user's bank account. Cash may also be used to pay for services where the supplier does not accept vouchers or local orders.

Section 17 support

5. Use of section 17 funds

Section 17 payments must be used to purchase items or services or provide support in accordance with the child's plan, and social workers need to show how payments, services or goods will contribute towards implementing the child's plan and meeting the child's needs.

5.1 Subsistence

- When considering whether to provide an emergency cash payment for subsistence, social workers should:
 - ensure that the service user has approached the Benefits Agency first and have been refused help **or**
 - that the Benefits Agency is closed **or**
 - benefit has been lost or stolen. (Parents must provide a police crime report before any payment is made).
- All subsistence payments should be calculated according to the current levels of benefit payments.
- Social workers should also be aware of any patterns of previous payments or loans to the family; where there are repeated requests for emergency financial assistance. It may be necessary to carry out a more in-depth assessment of the family's circumstances in order to provide more appropriate services to support them.

5.2 Clothing, utilities and other household items

- Provision of any of clothing, utilities and household items must be linked to an assessed need of the child and where parents need help in providing basic items. Parents should be encouraged to seek financial support for these items from other sources, for example the Benefits Agency.
- Where possible, payments should be via vouchers or purchase orders rather than cash and paid directly to the supplier.

Section 17 support

5.3 Direct work with children

Cash payments can be made to social workers to reimburse costs relating to direct work with the child, but only where the work clearly supports the child's plan. Social workers must obtain written authorisation from their managers and be able to produce receipts for expenditure.

5.4 Transport

- Assistance with transport costs can only be paid in support of the child's plan, for example to help parents with extra costs of attending meetings, therapy or health assessments, or in cases of emergency where a child needs to be taken to a place of safety.
- Travel warrants should be used wherever possible, although cash may be given for other forms of public transport where this is a cheaper alternative. Where possible, social workers should make use of e-tickets available via the [Registration](#) page.

5.5 Supporting family and friends carers

- Where family or friends agree to care for a child for a short period because parents are unable to do so, for example due to illness, the carer can receive financial support to help them with the extra costs.
- Section 17 can only be used to provide support to family and friends care arrangements where CSFH have had no involvement in placing the child. If the child is placed under Regulation 24 because they are looked after, payments in support of the placement should be made from the section 20 budget.
- If the carer is not the child's grandparent, sibling, aunt or uncle or step-parent, the arrangement becomes a private fostering arrangement. Social workers should refer to the *Private fostering* policy for guidance on referring the child. [Private Fostering](#)
- Social workers should refer to the *Kinship care* policy for further details on financial support for family and friends/kinship carers. [Kinship Care](#)

Section 17 support

5.6 Accommodation costs

Accommodation costs can be paid under section 17 in the following circumstances:

5.6.1 *Homeless families*

- Families who are intentionally homeless can have their accommodation costs met under section 17 in order to ensure the child is living in a safe and suitable environment.
- Costs that may be provided are deposits for private rented accommodation or rent on private accommodation where housing benefit has been stopped. Social workers should ensure that landlords sign an agreement with CSFH to return the deposit once the tenancy has ended. Copies of the agreement are available from the finance officer.
- All requests must be authorised by the Head of Service who may ask for information about the family's history of rent arrears and reasons for eviction before deciding on whether to agree to the payment.

5.6.2 *During section 47 enquiries*

If during a section 47 enquiry it is agreed that a member of the household needs to leave the child's home in order to ensure the child's safety, CSFH can agree to assist that person in meeting the costs of alternative accommodation. Provision will be on a temporary basis only whilst a section 47 enquiry is on-going.

5.6.3 *Families fleeing domestic abuse*

- CSFH can meet the costs of any temporary accommodation needed by a family who are leaving their home to escape high levels of domestic abuse and where refuge accommodation is not available.
- It is an expectation that as part of on-going case work, social workers liaise with Housing to explore housing options for the family; social workers should refer to the division's domestic abuse policy for further details, in particular on when case responsibility passes to other local authorities when families move out of Camden.

<..\Domestic abuse and family violence\Policies and protocols\CSFH Domestic abuse policy.doc>

5.6.4 *Payments to families placed outside Camden*

If CSFH has housed a family outside Camden, the division will still remain responsible for payment of any other service or support such as subsistence. However, if the family live some distance from Camden, social workers can contact the receiving local authority to arrange for them to pay money out on Camden's behalf and bill for reimbursement.

5.7 Holidays and school trips

Cost of holidays and school trips can only be met where the family are receiving an on-going social work service from CSFH. Payments should, wherever possible, be made directly to the supplier.

5.8 Services for parents and carers

- Homecare or child care services may be provided to parents and carers where assessment has identified the need for support in caring for their child. Services may be provided by adult social care or through private agencies.
- All workers from private agencies who provide home-based services that will bring them into contact with children must have an up-to-date enhanced DBS check.
- Where possible, social workers should explore the possibility of sharing costs with adult social care and agree terms of joint funding with adult services, particularly where the parent is in receipt of adult social care services.

5.9 Day care and nursery provision

- Social workers should ensure that pre-school children aged 3 plus have access to free nursery provision in line with their legal entitlement.
- Social workers can also request a day care package for children (either a nursery place or supported childminding) via the Day Care Panel where a child is subject to a child in need or child protection plan and:
 - they are under 3 years old and are "in need" or,
 - they have not been allocated a nursery place, or
 - they need a place in a Camden nursery in order to monitor their welfare as part of their plan.

Section 17 support

- For more information on how to apply, social workers should refer to the Day Care protocol available at: [day-care-protocol-2019.pdf](#)

5.10 Asylum seeking families

Asylum seeking families are generally supported by the Home Office. As this support covers basic needs such as accommodation and subsistence, section 17 funds should not be used to support asylum seeking families.

However, asylum seeking families can receive further support from their local authority under section 17 where children are assessed as having unmet needs other than those relating to accommodation or basic financial support. Support can only be provided following a child and family assessment to identify the child's needs and an initial plan drawn up.

All unaccompanied minors who are seeking asylum are automatically referred to their local authority for support, and in Camden, LAC social workers will assess these cases.

Some families will have ***no recourse to public funds*** either because of their immigration status or because they have no right to work in the UK and cannot access welfare benefits. Social workers should refer to the divisional policy for guidance on establishing whether Camden can lawfully support these families under section 17.

[No recourse to public funds policy.doc](#)

5.12 Payments on behalf of other local authorities

Payments may be made to children, young people or a family on behalf of another local authority only if there is written confirmation from them to reimburse CSFH. A copy of this confirmation should be passed to the finance officer to arrange invoicing the local authority.

6. Procedures

6.1 Authorisation and budget projection

No payment under section 17 can be made unless an assessment has been undertaken and an initial or child/young person's plan completed.

Section 17 support

Authorisation for payments from the section 17 budget must be agreed at the relevant managerial level in advance. Authorisation levels are:

Amount per payment	Annual ceiling per family	Required signature
Up to £10	Up to £50	Social worker/senior practitioner
Up to £50	Up to £250	Senior practitioner
Up to £250	Up to £500	Team manager
Up to £3000	Up to £3000	Head of Service
Over £3000	Over £3000	Director

Where it is known that a family will require a considerable package of care, this should be calculated on quarterly basis within the financial year – ie on 3 monthly basis (for maximum period of 13 weeks within the 3 monthly period/quarter). The financial projection must be submitted to the team manager and Head of Service for approval.

6.2 Completing the application for financial assistance form

- The application for financial assistance form must be completed in advance of payment, but the form can be used to authorise a series of payments up to 13 weeks as long as social workers provide a schedule of dates and amounts. The form must be signed by the relevant officer authorising the payment (see table above).
- All sections of the form should be completed by the social worker. The exact cost of the service and the period of time covered should be recorded on the form.
- Details of benefits that the family are receiving and any other sources of income should be verified by the social worker and the information included on the form. If there is any agreement that a family will re-pay financial assistance or contribute towards costs, this should also be recorded.
- Where there is a joint financing agreement with another agency, written evidence of this should be attached to the form. The agreement should include the names and addresses of agencies, invoice details, names of budget holders, the amounts each agency have agreed to contribute and the period of time when the agreement will be in force.