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Savings Policyfor Children in Care

April 2024

To be reviewed in Sept. 2025.

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1. **Introduction**

This document provides the relevant information for all key staff and carers to ensure that Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Savings Policy for Children in Care is implemented appropriately and consistently for all children and young people (aged 0 - 18).

This policy sets out the context and overarching principles for savings for Children in the Care of Northamptonshire Children’s Trust.

Our aim is to ensure all Children in Care receive equitable savings and develop financial capability skills to manage the savings available to them when they leave care.

All savings will be deducted from source, removing the responsibility of individual carers/providers to save, although an additional savings account may be agreed and set up between the young person, their social worker and carer/s.

1. **Key principles**

Northamptonshire Children’s Trust will have arrangements in place to ensure all children and young people:

* Have short- and long-term savings made whilst they are in care.
* Experience the same consistent and equitable approach.
* Develop money management and financial capability skills.
* Have savings to support their transition to independence.
* Have the same amount saved weekly on their behalf, regardless of the type of placement (foster / residential / semi-independent unit / secure accommodation, etc.).

1. **Scope**

## 3.1 This policy applies to all children and young people (under 18) who:

* Are In the care of Northamptonshire Children’s Trust whether they are placed with in-house foster carers (including connected carers), independent fostering agencies, in children’s residential homes, secure accommodation and semi-independent provision, long-stay hospital stays, remanded to custody and,
* Have been in care for at least 6 consecutive weeks

## 3.2 This policy does not apply to children who are:

### Placed with their parent(s) on the basis that:

* Parents do not receive allowances from the Local Authority to fund weekly contributions.
* Parents may already have savings arrangements in place for their child(ren).
* Child(ren) subject to these arrangements are likely to return to their parent(s) full time care, without a Care Order, in the short to medium term.
* Any savings previously made for these children will be held in their Share Found ISA account until they are aged 18, or if they have been looked after for less than 12 months but for more than 6 weeks, parents will be responsible for their children’s savings.

### Receiving short term breaks under Section 20, on the basis that:

* The nature of the short-term break means they will never be a child in care continuously for 1 year or more

Emergency and Respite Foster Care

If the child is placed into with an emergency foster carer, the carer will not have money taken at source as this is not the child’s longer term home. If the child remains with that carer after 6 weeks, the Payments Hub will commence deductions as it is presumed that this is the child’s longer-term home.

If the child is placed in a respite care arrangement as part of their Care Plan, deductions will be taken from their substantive carers. Please remember that if the child is new to care, savings will not commence for the first 6 weeks.

1. **Savings amounts**

The amount of money saved for each child/young person per week will be £5.

Should carers wish to make other contributions to any child/young person’s savings, they must inform the allocated social worker so those savings can be tracked for when the young person leaves the care of the Trust.

1. **Savings account**

All savings are administered in the child’s name by Northamptonshire Children’s Trust. Savings accounts will be set up by the Children’s Payment Hub no later than week 10 of the child’s care journey. Savings will commence after the child has been looked after for 6 weeks consecutive weeks. These savings will be held by Northamptonshire Children’s Trust.

For children and young people who have been in care for at least a year and fit the eligibility criteria (see [appendix 1),](#Appendix1) savings will be kept in a Junior ISA via The Share Foundation. This will be set up once the Children’s Payment Hub team notifies the Share Foundation of any new child or young person in care who are eligible.

Once a Junior ISA has been set up, the Government will add an initial £200 to each account. Savings accrued within the first 12 months will be added to the account. Future savings will continue to be deducted at source on a weekly basis.

At the introduction of this policy, some Children in Care will already have a Child Trust Fund. This scheme was offered to children born between certain dates in 2002 and 2011 (See [appendix 1](#Appendix1) for details). This scheme is now closed for new deposits and has been replaced with the Junior ISA. Child Trust Fund accounts already open will continue until the children and young people reach the age of 18.

Whilst the Local Authority will pay the weekly saving amount into the young person's Share Foundation Account, this does not preclude carers actively supporting young people establishing local savings arrangements to enhance their confidence and understanding of good money management. Equally, we should also encourage young people to open their own account to aid their identity and self-worth.

Young people cannot access money from their Share Foundation Account before they are aged 18.

[Your age: 15-17 — The Share Foundation](https://www.sharefound.org/your-age-15-17)

1. **Transition from previous savings arrangements**

## Children in Care – Under 16

Where possible, all carers who currently hold savings for Children in Care who are under 18 years of age, at the date the policy is implemented, will transfer these savings to Northamptonshire Children’s Trust to hold on the child’s behalf through a BACS payment directly to the Northamptonshire Children’s Trust account. These monies will then be transferred to the young person's Share Foundation Account.

Confirmation will be sent to all carers through Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Placement Management Service, advising them of the changes, with the necessary account details and instructions for transfer. At the point of implementation, all Children placed within the care of Northamptonshire Children’s Trust, who meet the scope and criteria set out in this document, will have savings transferred onto this new scheme.

Where current savings cannot be accessed prior to a young person becoming 18, the carer will continue to oversee these accounts. At the point of the policy’s implementation, all future savings for children under 18 will be made directly into their Share Foundation Account.

## Children in care – 16 & 17 years of age

There are some young people who choose to live more independently and for whom, we must ensure that the placement provider, allocated social worker, and where appropriate, their Personal Advisor, must educate the young person to develop their independence skills through their Pathway Plan. To this end, they should be encouraged to make their own savings.

To ensure parity with children who live in residential homes or within foster families, the Trust will make a £5 per week donation to their savings, for the duration that they live in an ISA. The money will be saved in a general amenities fund and transferred into their Share Foundation account at aged 18. On request, the money can be transferred into their own bank account by agreement with their social worker. The £5 will be taken at source and will commence in November 2024.

For young people entering care after they have reached the age of 17, they will not be eligible for a Share Foundation account as they have not been looked-after for a full 12-months. These young people must be informed of their savings options by their allocated social worker when they enter care.

1. **Withdrawals of savings**

Children and young people can only access their savings on their 18th birthday or any time after this date.

Wherever possible, payment of savings to a young person should happen on the day they become 18 years old. It would be helpful if allocated workers provide details to the Payment Hub prior to this.

From NCT held savings:

It could take up to four weeks to process a payment from the date the request is made, therefore a request should be made by the social worker or personal advisor at least a month in advance of the young person’s 18th birthday and as part of preparation for leaving care.

The request, along with bank account details of the young person, should be made by email to [childrensamenitycfn@nctrust.co.uk](mailto:childrensamenitycfn@nctrust.co.uk) and the savings will be paid to the young person’s bank account within four weeks of the request. If the young person does not have a bank account into which the money can be transferred, the social worker or personal advisor should seek to transfer the money to the young person in the most appropriate manner. However, wherever possible, a bank account should be opened no later than when the child reaches the age of 14 (and as early as possible) as part of their identity and/or move into independence.

The young person’s social worker or personal advisor, supported by the child’s carer or keyworker, is expected to advise and assist the young person to plan to use the money wisely. This should be clearly recorded on the young person's file and in their Pathway Plan.

## From a junior ISA or child trust fund (via the Share Foundation)

If the young person is approaching their 18th birthday and still a Child in Care, The Share Foundation will notify Northamptonshire Children’s Trust a month before a young person’s 18th birthday about their savings and how to claim their money. To claim the young person’s money, proof of identity and a bank account will be required. The Children’s Payments Hub will send this claim form to the young person’s social worker or personal advisor, who are responsible for ensuring that the young person completes the form as soon as possible. Once the claim has been submitted, it may take 4 – 6 weeks for money to be transferred from the ISA to the young person’s bank account.

If no claim is made, the money will remain in an adult ISA under the name of the young person until they make a claim at any point after their 18th birthday.

1. **Financial management education**

Sound money management is one of the most valuable life skills you can teach children and starting when they're young is best.

Carers, social workers and key-workers should actively develop children and young people’s understanding of good money management as early as possible;

* Help children and young people understand the value of money.
* Help children spend and save their pocket, and other, money.
* Actively encourage savings i.e., piggy banks, pre-paid savings card (i.e., GoHenry Cards) for children and accessible savings accounts for older young people.
* Support young people to open bank accounts at the earliest opportunity.
* Support older young people to earn their own money through part-time jobs (as appropriate).
* Money management should be included within Care Plans and Pathway Plans.

Young people are further supported to plan for independence through the pathway planning process, which begins as young people approach the age of 16. Specific support will be given around finances and budgeting with access offered to relevant money management and investment courses by the child’s carer, key-worker, social worker and personal advisor. Who is leading on this should be clearly recorded on the young person's Pathway Plan and agreed at the Child in Care Review Meeting.

The Share Foundation provides a free online programme for young people (from 15 – 25) to improve their financial capability skills. Details of the programme and how to register a young person can be found [here](https://www.sharefound.org/stepladder-of-achievement)

1. **Responsibilities**

## 9.1 Social worker / personal advisor

* To ensure the child or young person is aware of their savings held by Northamptonshire Children’s Trust or the Share Foundation and when they can access it.
* To ensure that the child or young person’s personal finances are discussed at the Placement Planning Meeting and subsequent Child in Care Review meetings.
* To ensure that the child / young person is supported to develop age-appropriate financial capability skills or appoint a trusted person to do this on their behalf should the need arise.
* To ensure that the child / young person understands how to access their savings at age 18.
* To clearly record on a young person’s file where savings are held and the amounts that are claimed.

## 9.2 Placement Commissioning Team – contract management:

* To ensure all placements providers are issued with Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Savings Policy.
* To monitor compliance of the policy and the contractual arrangements.

## 9.3 Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO):

* To check the child / young person is aware of their savings account.
* To check the child / young person is developing appropriate financial capability skills.
* To ensure that an application to access savings has been made at least 4 weeks before their 18th birthday.
* To monitor the progress of the Pathway Plan to ensure key milestones are achieved (e.g. bank account opened, development of financial management skills).

## 9.4 Children’s Payment Hub:

* To oversee children & young people savings from 6- 52 weeks care through Northamptonshire Amenity Savings arrangements.
* To notify the Share Foundation of any new children in the care of Northamptonshire Children’s Trust who are eligible for a Junior ISA.
* To monitor and oversee all young people's savings with The Share Foundation and act as the point of contact between Northamptonshire Children's Trust and The Share Foundation.
* To monitor the completion and return of the Share Foundation claim form for young people reaching their 18th birthday.

## 9.5 Carers and Keyworker

* To assist young people in good money management and to understand all savings options available to them.
* To help young people make decisions on how to spend and/or move their savings to other savings options.
* To ensure the child / young person has a bank account set up in their name as early as possible, and no later than at 14 years of age.

1. **Claiming savings**

On occasion, a young person who had savings made according to the previous scheme, may reach their 18th birthday and the whereabouts of their savings cannot be established.

* This may be due to them having experienced several placement changes, or the expectations for carers / providers to make savings on their behalf had not been monitored.
* In these instances, all efforts must be made by the social worker and Personal Advisor and Placement Management Services/Quality and Outcomes Team, in the 6 months before the 18th birthday to obtain any savings from previous care givers and agencies.

If the young person’s full entitlement, based on the number of weeks they were looked after, cannot be obtained, representation needs to be made to the Strategic Managers for Corporate Parenting to authorize payment of the remaining entitlement.

Unclaimed savings for children in care will remain within Northamptonshire Children’s Trust until such time as they are claimed. There is no time limit on previous Children in Care claiming their savings entitlement.

1. **Children and young people who leave care before their 18th birthday**

## 11.1 Northamptonshire Childrens Trust held savings

For children and young people, regardless of their age, their savings will be held by Northamptonshire Children’s Trust on their behalf. Parents, carers, children and young people according to their age and understanding, will be provided with written details about the level of savings they have accrued and how to claim these on their 18th birthday. Clear information will be held on their case record and the savings can be claimed by the young person at any point after their 18th birthday.

Savings can only be paid to a parent or guardian if there is a clear and strong rationale for why this is recommended. Authorization must be provided by the Strategic Managers for Corporate Parenting.

Savings will continue to be made while the child is looked after until they cease to be looked after by returning to the care of their parents, or upon the granting of a Child Arrangement Order, Adoption Order or Special Guardianship Order. Where these arrangements apply, children and their care givers will receive written information about their savings and how to claim. Letters for children / young people will form part of their life journey work.

## 11.2 A junior ISA or child trust fund (via the Share Foundation)

If a child/young person ceases to be looked after by Northamptonshire Children’s Trust, the Share Foundation should be notified by Northamptonshire Children’s Trust, which will prompt a status change letter to be sent to the Trust. This places the parent/carer as the main point of contact for the child/young person’s Junior ISA or Child Trust Fund.

The account will be held in the name of the child/young person until they turn 18 and are able to submit a claim to withdraw their money. The parent/carer will not have access to withdraw money at any point that the money is placed into the Share Foundation account.

# Appendix 1 – Savings accounts scope and criteria

**Junior ISA – criteria:**

For a child or young person to be eligible for a Junior ISA they must:

* Be under 18 on application.
* Not have a Child Trust Fund (those born between 1 Sept 2002 and 2 Jan 2011 would generally have a Child Trust Fund).
* Be resident in the UK.
* Have been continuously looked after for one year or longer after 3rd January 2011 (they may have entered care before this date but must have been in continuous care until 3rd January 2012 to qualify).

For a junior ISA, if the criteria apply, the Share Foundation will open the accounts with an initial Government contribution of £200.

**Child trust fund - criteria:**

* Born between 1st September 2002 & 2nd January 2011.
* Looked after by a Local Authority before 3rd April 2011.
* Child / young person was living in the UK.
* The child / young person was not subject to any immigration restrictions or that these restrictions were no longer active before 3rd April 2011.
* Child Trust Funds are now closed to new deposits.

**Trust held savings:**

When savings for children/young people are unclaimed, they will be kept under their name in the Northamptonshire Children’s Trust General Ledger account until they are claimed by the young person.