

GRANTS POLICY

**Revised December 2024
Approved by the Trustees March 2025**

1. General

The general policy of the Trustees is to make grants of amounts up to £700 which will either help to advance the education or vocational training or employability of children and young people under the age of 26, or provide those who are leaving care, or have recently left care, with basic items, facilities or equipment. The overall aim is to give this group the same chance as those who have not been in care.

2. Beneficiaries

The Trustees will aim to distribute grants to a wide range of beneficiaries under the age of 26, covering a range of ethnicity, nationality, age, gender, disability and geographic location. Grants are only payable to those who were in care in England & Wales. This includes asylum seekers who are looked after within the care system. In the case of applicants seeking asylum they must be classified as 'Relevant Young People' or 'Former Relevant Young People'. Applications from those in guardianship or kinship care arrangements are not eligible.

3. Restrictions on Grants

(a) Scope of grants

The purpose of the Foundation is to provide those kinds of things and opportunities which loving parents would normally provide for their children but which, because they are or have been in care, children and young people are not able to have or experience. The Foundation is often asked to help young people who are suffering from severe poverty but unless the young person is suffering deprivation as a direct consequence of being in care, or of having been in care, the Foundation will, with regret, not be able to assist them, however great their need. For this reason, priority will generally be given to applicants who can demonstrate that their need is related to their recent experience of life in care.

(b) Subsidising other agencies

The Spark Foundation will not subsidise the legal obligations of other agencies. For example, a grant should supplement and not replace the financial support provided by local authorities as part of their duty of care.

The Trustees will **not** pay for items or expenses for which:

- the local authority is legally obliged to pay
- schools, either maintained or academy trusts, are funded to provide through the Pupil Premium Grant.
- landlords are responsible by law or under a tenancy agreement.

The Trustees will support the efforts of carers and social workers to obtain the maximum financial support from a child's local authority.

(c) Subsidising carers

The payments made to carers by fostering agencies should enable them to provide normal outings, holidays, games, clothing and sporting equipment for the children in their care and this kind of expenditure will not usually be provided by the Foundation.

(d) Recurring payments

The Trustees are not able to commit the Foundation to ongoing or recurrent expenditure. They may approve a grant to meet up to one year's fees for classes or training to give a child an opportunity to develop his/her skills but applicants will be required to have considered how the fees will be paid for in subsequent years if the child wishes to continue.

(e) Standard amounts

In order to ensure fairness and consistency we have agreed maximum amounts for certain common items. These amounts will be applied unless there are special circumstances. The amounts are on our website and will be reviewed by the Trustees from time to time. From January 2025 the amounts are:

- Push bike, helmet and lock £300.00
- Fridge/Freezer £ 250.00
- Cooking equipment (e.g. air fryer) £150.00
- Washing Machine £ 250.00

4. Ranking of Applications

The Foundation has a duty to ensure that its limited funds are distributed as beneficially as possible. This will frequently involve choosing between applications. Trustees will try to balance grants for essential household items with grants for developing opportunities for the future. Applications are therefore divided into the following two categories:

Category	
A	<p>1. Items and payments that allow the young person to move from a position of dependency and/or deprivation to one of independence and/or self-sufficiency.</p> <p>2. Essential household items that the applicant is not able to afford from their income or other sources. This might include the replacement of white goods that are beyond repair.</p> <p>Spark will not fund household items requested by applicants within two years of receiving their 'setting up home allowance'/'leaving care grant', or where they are eligible for this financial support from their local authority. From January 2025 we will not be funding replacement cookers, but we will consider portable items like air fryers, microwaves etc.</p>

	<p>3. Essential items required by care leavers who have become parents</p> <p>Applicants must explain which sources of statutory funding they have been able to access and how this has been spent. From January 2025 we will not fund carpets but applications for vinyl flooring, rugs, play mats and similar portable items will be considered.</p>
<p>B</p>	<p>1. Help with the cost of education, training or starting work</p> <p>This could include training costs, transportation, special equipment or clothing and computers for university. The applicant must explain what contribution the Local Authority and/or foster carers are able to make. Applicants for grants for push bikes must commit to attend a cycle training programme</p> <p>2. Activities and equipment to enable young people to develop their employability through skills, interests and self-esteem</p> <p>Applicants must explain what contribution the Local Authority and/or foster carers are able to make for these activities or items.</p> <p>3. Driving lessons up to a maximum grant of £600</p> <p>We only pay for driving lessons where you</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need to be able to drive for your job and • can demonstrate that you can afford to run a car and pay the insurance and • are over 18 and • have passed your Driving Theory test <p>4. Computers up to a maximum grant of £350 (unless there are special circumstances)</p> <p>The Foundation expects that young people in foster care will have access to a computer in the home for educational purposes and will not fund a computer unless there are special circumstances. Young people in Further Education will generally be expected to use the computers available at the educational establishment. Where a young person requests a computer to assist with university studies, or has special circumstances that limit their access to college/community-based computers, then their request for a computer will be considered.</p>

5. Processing applications

(a) The application

All applications must be received by 5pm on the closing date for each meeting listed on the website. Trustees meet four times a year. Applications must be on the prescribed form and signed by the young person's carer, social worker or by some

other responsible person who should explain his/her connections with the young person.

Sufficient background information must be given to enable the Trustees to understand

- What the grant will be used for
- Why that particular amount has been asked for eg clear costings and the basis of these costings
- The reasons why the young person needs the item or service
- What difference having the item or service will make
- Some information about the young person including age, length of time in care and his/her progress and achievements
- Where the grant is to be used to buy goods or services, details of who the grant should be paid to will be required

(b) Payment

BACS payments will normally be made to the young person, to his/her carer or to the relevant local authority. In some circumstance payment will be made directly to the goods or services provider e.g. a course provider.

(c) Feedback

The Trustees would like to hear how the grant has been used and how the young person has benefited.