

Grant Application FAQ's

Version June 2024

Can I apply?

Yes, if you are under the age of 26 and are either in care, or are a care leaver with "Relevant" or "Former Relevant" care leaver status.

How much can I apply for?

Up to £700.

Can I apply for more than £700?

If you absolutely need more than £700 then ask for what you need. But say why you need that extra money.

Will I have to pay the money back?

No. It's a grant and that means we give you the money and you don't have to pay it back. Ever.

How do I apply?

You complete the application form. You tell us what you want the money for, how much money you need and why having this money will make a difference.

If I complete the application form will I automatically get the money?

No. We would like to fund everyone but we have a limited amount of money. You are more likely to get the money if you:

- answer all the questions on the form
- clearly explain why you want the item
- evidence the cost of the item. You can often find things you need on Gumtree or ebay. If not, provide quotes from suppliers like Argos or IKEA
- explain the difference having the item will make

See the guidance on the Spark website at

<https://www.sparkfoundation.org.uk/Unsuccessful.html>

When can I apply?

We accept applications as follows:

- From 1 January for the March meeting
- From 1 April for the June meeting
- From 1 July for the September meeting
- From 1 October for the December meeting.

Closing dates for applications are posted on the application web page at

<https://www.sparkfoundation.org.uk/GrantsForm.html>.

When will I hear if I've got the money?

We meet four times a year, usually in March, June, September and December. We will let you know by the end of that month whether or not we've given you a grant.

I'm leaving care and my leaving care grant isn't enough. Can I apply?

If you have received a Setting Up Home Allowance in the last two years then we will not provide additional funding for household items at this time. If you received and spent the leaving care grant more than two years ago then we may be able to help you. In the past we have funded washing machines, fridges, freezers, beds, furniture, bedding, sofas, carpets and curtains! But please do let us know how much your Leaving Care Grant was and how you have spent it.

Maximum amounts granted for white goods

Please note, when considering applications for "white goods" the Trustees have set the following maximum amounts: -

- Fridge/Freezer £350
- Cooker £350
- Washing Machine £300

All quotes must also show delivery, installation and removal/recycling costs.

Will you pay for renovating or redecorating my rented accommodation?

Unlikely. Normally we would expect the landlord to have responsibility for this.

Will you pay for my travel expenses to get to college?

Unlikely as we do not pay recurring costs.

I need a camera for my course at college. Would you buy me one?

Yes. We can buy you stuff you need at college or for starting work eg protective clothing or tools.

I'm a foster carer and care for a disabled child. Would you buy specialist software for our computer?

Yes. We want to help young people in care attain their full potential.

I'm a foster carer. I think the child I care for would really benefit from a holiday.

Would you pay for that?

It all depends. We would consider paying for an adventure or activity holiday, such as, Tall Ships or with PGL. We have also paid part of the cost of an overseas holiday to meet birth family. But we will only fund a holiday where it is clearly additional to what we would expect a foster carer to pay for.

I've built up some debts which mean I cannot move into more suitable accommodation. Can you help?

Possibly. Tell us how the debts came about and what you are doing to reduce them. We may make a contribution where it is clear that it will help you move on with your life.

I really want to learn to drive. Will you pay for that?

This is a bit tricky. We are very unlikely to pay for driving lessons if you just want to get around in a town or city where public transport options are available. Neither are we likely to pay for lessons if you are studying full time. It is also worth you checking with your Local Authority. When you leave care, your local council might offer you some help with learning to drive. The level of support depends on where you live: some councils will pay for lessons; others will help with the cost of a provisional licence.

We don't want to pay for driving lessons and then discover that you can't afford the insurance on a car or don't have a car and so don't use your new found skill. So, if you apply for driving

lessons, let us know how you are going to be able to afford a car and its insurance. We will also require proof that you have a Provisional Driving Licence and have passed the Driving Theory Test. If you do not tell us this information we are unlikely to give you the money.

Maximum amounts granted for Driving Lessons and Bicycles

Please note, when considering applications for Driving Lessons and Bicycles, the Trustees have set the following maximum amounts:-

- Driving Lessons - £600
- Bicycle, including helmet, lights and lock - £300

N.B. Before applying for a Bicycle Grant, you will need to commit to complete Cycling Proficiency Training before going out on public roads.

Are there any charities that could help me purchase a bicycle?

There are a number of charities locally throughout England and Wales which offer support in purchasing a bicycle or offer reconditioned bicycles. The Bike Project <https://thebikeproject.co.uk> offers reconditioned bicycles to refugees and people seeking asylum in London and Birmingham.

Will you pay for a musical instrument?

We might, especially if having an instrument would enable you to join a band and/or progress towards a qualification. It would need to be portable, in case you move. The charity Music for All (www.musicforall.org.uk) gives both physical instruments and grants for instruments and if music is your passion this might be the best route for you to go.

I don't have my own computer. Will you buy me one?

This is another tricky one. Yes, we may buy you your own laptop if you are at university. If you aren't at university our expectation is that your foster carer/college will have a computer which you can use. If they don't, then explain this on the application form. Also consider whether a Chromebook would meet your needs. Chromebooks are cheaper and so if we buy you a Chromebook rather than a conventional laptop it means we have more money to help someone else.

The maximum amount granted for laptops is £350, although, in exceptional circumstances, this may be exceeded if your course has specialist computing requirements.

I'm a social worker. Can I apply for money to pay for drama lessons for one of my young people in care?

Yes. Over the years, we've bought drama lessons, musical instruments, sports kits, gym membership, bikes.

Is there anything you won't fund?

We are here to fund extras. We do not fund things which are the responsibility of the local authority, fostering agency or carer.