

Grant Application FAQ's

Version January 2025

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?

No. We are regularly oversubscribed and aim to help the maximum numbers of care leavers possible.

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 £250
- Air frier £150
- Washing Machine £200

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. Can I apply for a grant to buy one?

Yes, you can apply for equipment that you need at college or for starting work, e.g. protective clothing or tools.

I'm a foster carer and care for a disabled child. Can I apply for a grant to buy specialist software for our computer?

Yes. We want to help young people in care attain their full potential, but we like to know if you are in receipt of a Disability Living Allowance/Personal Independence Payment or the Local Authority has been approached first.

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 really want to learn to drive. Can I apply for grant for lessons?

You can apply for driving lessons. However, please note that we will only consider your application if you:

- need to be able to drive for your job;
- can demonstrate that you can afford to run a car and pay the insurance;
- are over 18;
- have passed your Driving Theory test.

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. Most councils offer affordable courses for adults for a small fee.

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, 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.