



Statutory guidance

Junior individual saving accounts for looked after children

Updated 9 July 2020

Contents

- [Overview](#)
- [Who this guidance is for](#)
- [Which children are affected by this guidance](#)
- [The Share Foundation](#)
- [Eligibility for a Junior ISA](#)
- [Actions for the local authority in relation to Junior ISAs](#)
- [Eligibility for a Child Trust Fund](#)
- [Actions for the local authority to take in relation to CTFs](#)
- [Role of The Share Foundation relating to Junior ISAs](#)
- [Role of The Share Foundation relating to CTFs](#)
- [Further information](#)

Overview

This guidance is issued by the Department for Education under section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970, which requires local authorities in exercising their social services functions to act under the general guidance of the Secretary of State. This guidance should be complied with by local authorities when exercising these functions, unless local circumstances indicate exceptional reasons that justify a variation. This guidance will next be reviewed, at the latest, in March 2021.

The guidance to independent reviewing officers is issued under section 25B(2)(b) of the Children Act 1989.

This guidance relates to section 22 of the Children Act 1989 and section 3(10) of the Child Trust Funds Act 2004.

Who this guidance is for

This guidance is for local authority:

- children's services social workers
- personal advisers
- frontline managers who have particular responsibilities in relation to care leavers and looked after children
- lead members
- directors of children's services
- managers of services for care leavers and looked after children
- commissioners of services for care leavers and looked after children
- independent reviewing officers

Which children are affected by this guidance

Junior ISA

Children looked after for 12 months or more and not eligible for a Child Trust Fund (CTF) are entitled to a £200 payment from the government into a Junior Individual Savings Account (Junior ISA).

Child Trust Fund

This guidance also covers children eligible for a CTF, who will already have an account (with a government contribution).

The Share Foundation

The Department for Education has contracted The Share Foundation to administer the Junior ISA scheme until 31 March 2021. The Share Foundation will open and manage Junior ISA accounts using independent selection advice while children remain looked after. The Share Foundation will also seek to raise additional funding from charitable sources for distribution to the accounts, and support the financial education of looked after children at appropriate times, so that they can understand how best to use the financial asset of their account.

From 1 October 2017, The Share Foundation has been responsible for managing the CTFs of children who became looked after for any continuous period of 12 months or more after 1 October 2017. The Share Foundation also became responsible for managing the CTFs of children who were already looked after on 1 October 2017, irrespective of the length of time they had been looked after.

Eligibility for a Junior ISA

The Junior ISA for looked after children scheme replaces the support previously provided through CTFs. A Junior ISA will be opened for every child (if they do not already have one) who has been looked after for any continuous period of 12 months or more, starting on or after 3 January 2011 and who is not eligible for a CTF. The government will provide an initial £200 payment to open the accounts.

Junior ISAs are long-term tax-advantaged saving accounts launched in November 2011 for children up to the age of 18 who are not eligible for a CTF. Children are eligible for a Junior ISA if they are under 18, resident in the UK, and not eligible for a CTF. Anyone can pay money into the accounts, but the funds cannot then be accessed by the account holder until their 18th birthday. At this age, the account will mature into a standard (adult) ISA.

Actions for the local authority in relation to Junior ISAs

Unless there are exceptional reasons that justify a variation, local authorities must:

- on request from The Share Foundation, provide them with a named contact for dealing with all aspects of the Junior ISA scheme
- respond to requests for information from The Share Foundation, to enable them to open the Junior ISAs and draw down the £200 payments
- ensure that there are effective and proportionate security arrangements safeguarding the integrity and confidentiality of the data to be sent to and received from The Share Foundation, in full compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998
- once an account has been opened, ensure that, as an integral part of the care planning review and where it is appropriate to do so, the carer, parent and child are made aware of the account
- once a child stops being looked after, notify The Share Foundation and provide the necessary information to the person with parental responsibility for the child (and the child if 16 or 17 years old) so that they may take over the management of the account

In addition, independent reviewing officers should ensure local authorities carry out their duty as good corporate parents, so that children who are eligible for a Junior ISA receive funding and, where appropriate, they and their carers and parents receive suitable advice about their accounts, both while they are looked after and when they cease to be looked after.

Eligibility for a Child Trust Fund

Government payments to CTFs and new eligibility for these accounts ended in 2011, and the Junior ISA was subsequently introduced for children who were not eligible for a CTF. As with Junior ISAs, CTFs are long-term tax-advantaged saving accounts, which cannot be accessed until the child's 18th birthday and into which anyone can make a payment. At age 18, it is possible to transfer the funds into a standard (adult) ISA.

Until 30 September 2017, existing CTFs of looked after children were managed by the Official Solicitors for England and Wales and for Northern Ireland, and the Accountant of Court in Scotland. From 1 October 2017 The Share Foundation has been administering the CTFs of certain looked after children (see [Role of The Share Foundation relating to CTFs](#)), in addition to managing the Junior ISA scheme.

Actions for the local authority to take in relation to CTFs

Local authorities must:

- on request from The Share Foundation, provide them with a named contact for dealing with all aspects of CTFs of looked after children
- respond to requests for information from The Share Foundation, to enable them to identify and manage the relevant CTFs
- ensure that there are effective and proportionate security arrangements safeguarding the integrity and confidentiality of the data to be sent to and received from The Share Foundation, in full compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998
- once a CTF has come under the management of The Share Foundation, ensure that, as an integral part of the care planning review and where it is appropriate to do so, the carer, parent and child are made aware of the account and that it is being managed by The Share Foundation
- once a child stops being looked after, notify The Share Foundation and provide the necessary information to the person with parental responsibility for the child (and the child if 16 or 17 years old) so that they can take over the management of the CTF
- local authorities must check to ensure that the existence of CTFs for looked after children is known to a person in a position of parental responsibility who acts as registered contact, and also known to their looked after child, if aged 16 or over. Where the responsible adult is unaware, The Share Foundation provides a search facility at [Find your lost Child Trust Fund account](#) and can also arrange financial learning to be made available for the looked after child - see [further information](#) for details.

In addition, independent reviewing officers should ensure local authorities carry out their duty as good corporate parents so that, where appropriate, children and their carers, parent and/or responsible adult, receive suitable advice about their CTF account, both while they are looked after and when they cease to be looked after.

Role of The Share Foundation relating to Junior ISAs

The Share Foundation will contact all local authorities requesting information such as the name, gender, date of birth and date the child first became looked after for 12 consecutive months or more. Local authorities must provide that data, so that children who they are, or have been, looking after can receive the payments to which they are entitled.

The Share Foundation receives data at a frequency that has been agreed between The Share Foundation and the local authority. All young people or their carers wishing to discuss specific details with The Share Foundation regarding the account must be authorised in advance by inclusion in these returns.

The Share Foundation has provided local authorities with information on the scheme, including access via [The Share Foundation website](#) to a set of standard guidance sheets which the local authority uses with carers, parents and children, as they deem appropriate. This may be so that the carer or child can pay additional funds into accounts and use them to build long-term savings. Or it may be so that they can request the account is changed to meet specific criteria, such as an ethical or Sharia-compliant account.

When Junior ISA holders reach the age of 16, they may take control of the account. This means they can make investment decisions for themselves, though they still cannot access funds until their 18th birthday. Local authorities should, as they deem appropriate, use materials provided by The Share Foundation so that 16 (and 17) year olds they are looking after, and care leavers, may assume investment control in this way.

The Share Foundation also provides the Stepladder programme to help local authorities support looked after children in learning about finances and so help them make the most of their account and the financial asset they will be able to access at the age of 18. The programme includes literacy, numeracy, financial education and a statement of intention for their future. It is available for all looked after children from the age of 15, and care leavers up to the age of 25. There is an incentivised version of the programme, Stepladder Plus, available in some local authority areas, for young people aged up to 18. Additional learning materials for looked after children under age 15 are available on [The Share Foundation website](#).

When a child is no longer being looked after because they have reached the age of 18, the local authority should use the materials provided by The Share Foundation to ensure they may access their matured accounts.

When a child is no longer being looked after before the age of 16, the local authority should use the materials provided by The Share Foundation to ensure the person with parental responsibility for the child is aware of the account and encourage them to take the necessary steps to assume control of the account. If the child leaves care at age 16 or 17, either they or their parent or carer could assume control of the account, if the child has not already done so.

Role of The Share Foundation relating to CTFs

The Share Foundation will contact all local authorities requesting information such as the name, gender, date of birth and date the child first became looked after for 12 consecutive months after 1 October 2017. Local authorities must provide that data, so that The Share Foundation can ensure that the accounts of the children they are responsible for can be managed effectively.

The Share Foundation will also contact all local authorities requesting similar information on those children who became looked after prior to 1 October 2017 but no notification had been provided to the Official Solicitor for England and Wales. Local authorities must provide that data, so The Share Foundation can ensure that the accounts of existing looked after children can come under effective management.

The Share Foundation will also contact all local authorities requesting information on those children who prior to 1 October 2017 were no longer looked after but no notification of the change in circumstances had been provided to the Official Solicitor for England and Wales. Local authorities must provide that data, so The Share Foundation can ensure that such accounts are accounted for and the responsible person can assume control of the CTF.

The Share Foundation will receive data at a frequency that has been agreed between The Share Foundation and the local authority. All local authority contacts wishing to discuss specific information with The Share Foundation must be authorised in advance by inclusion in these returns.

The Share Foundation will provide local authorities with information on CTFs, including access via [The Share Foundation website](#), to a set of standard guidance sheets which the local authority may use with carers, parents and children, as they deem appropriate. This would allow the carer or child to pay funds into accounts and use them to build long-term savings. Or it would allow the person with parental responsibility to request that The Share Foundation change the account to meet specific criteria, such as becoming a Sharia-compliant account.

When CTF holders reach the age of 16, they may take control of the account. This means they can make investment decisions for themselves, though they still cannot access funds until their 18th birthday. Local authorities should, as they deem appropriate, use materials provided by The Share Foundation so that 16 (and 17) year olds they are looking after, and care leavers, may assume investment control in this way.

The Share Foundation will also (through the [Stepladder programme](#)) provide materials to help local authorities support looked after children in learning about finances and so help them make the most of their CTF and the financial assets they will be able to access at the age of 18.

When a child is no longer being looked after because they have reached the age of 18, the local authority should use the materials provided by The Share Foundation to enable the child to access their matured CTF.

When a child is no longer being looked after and is under 16, the local authority should use the materials provided by The Share Foundation to ensure the person with parental responsibility for the child is aware of the account and encourage them to take the necessary steps to assume control of the account. If the child leaves care at age 16 or 17, the same material should be used to encourage the child or their parent to assume control of the account, if the child has not already done so.

Further information

- Further details about the history of the scheme are available at [Savings accounts for all children in long-term care](#).
- More information regarding The Share Foundation is available at [The Share Foundation website](#).
- Information about The Share Foundation's role in managing Child Trust Funds is available at [Accounts for looked after children](#).

Is this page useful? Yes No [Is there anything wrong with this page?](#)

Coronavirus (COVID-19) The UK has left the EU

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance and support](#) [Transition period: get ready for 2021](#)

Services and information Departments and policy

Benefits	Education and learning	How government works
Births, deaths, marriages and care	Employing people	Departments
Business and self-employed	Environment and countryside	Worldwide
Childcare and parenting	Housing and local services	Services
Citizenship and living in the UK	Money and tax	Guidance and regulation
Crime, justice and the law	Passports, travel and living abroad	News and communications
Disabled people	Visas and immigration	Research and statistics
Driving and transport	Working, jobs and pensions	Policy papers and consultations
		Transparency and freedom of information releases

