

Money, money, money

# Thrive

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The Fostering Network



# Get the lowdown...

## Hello!

Welcome to another issue of Thrive. This time our focus is on something that all of us need, most of us would like more of, and many of us will worry about not having enough of – money!

For many young people with care experience, the transition to adulthood can feel particularly scary money-wise, because they often don't have the same support systems in place as many of their peers (sometimes this is called 'the bank of mum and dad'). This issue of Thrive tries to address some of those fears and looks at what is available to help you – ways to get the money you are entitled to and how to make sure you're spending that money as well as possible. We also take a look at a pilot scheme that means Wales has the eyes of the world upon us – the basic income pilot for care leavers in Wales.

A well-known song says that 'money makes the world go round'. Unfortunately, that can very often feel true and it's easy to feel bad about ourselves if we're struggling financially. But remember what that clever guy Albert Einstein said: 'Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.'



PS: There's loads of issues of Thrive online with advice on everything from pathway planning to healthy relationships. Find them at [bit.ly/TFNThrive](http://bit.ly/TFNThrive).

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## Money makes the world go round

What do you think about money? Read these three quotes and think about which one best sums up what you feel about money.

*"Too many people spend money they haven't earned, to buy things they don't want, to impress people they don't like."*

Will Smith

*"When I was young, I thought that money was the most important thing in life; now that I am old, I know that it is."*

Oscar Wilde

*"Money has never made anyone happy, nor will it, there is nothing in its nature to produce happiness. The more of it one has the more one wants."*

Benjamin Franklin

### The million-pound question

When it comes to money there are usually two sides to the equation – how much money I'm spending and how much I'm saving. One of the most common questions young people (and older people!) have is the million-pound question: 'How can I save more money?'

There are four main ways to help your money spread further, meaning you might be able to save a little along the way too:

- **Spend less!** This can feel tricky during a 'cost-of-living' crisis but, by checking and comparing prices carefully, using discount vouchers and cancelling any unused subscriptions, you can make your money go further.
- **Earn it.** Of course, you'll want/need to spend some of your earnings on essential items and things you enjoy, but putting a bit into your savings every time you get paid or receive some money is a good idea if you can.
- **Sell things.** Selling unwanted items is a great way to declutter and make some extra money. There are soooo many websites and apps that you can sell things through, but you will need to be careful to make sure you earn money and don't lose it. Check out this article: [bit.ly/3Wb2SuA](http://bit.ly/3Wb2SuA)
- **Gifts.** Rather than a present, maybe you could ask for some money for your birthday or other special occasion.

Knowing where every pound is being spent is a great first step to saving money. Check out the MoneyHelper budget planner to help you do that: [bit.ly/3Yd4u8J](http://bit.ly/3Yd4u8J)

### + Reflect: How do you use your money?

If you had to describe how you would choose to use your money, which of these would it be?

- **Spender** – spenders live in the here and now, making decisions based on their happiness today and not thinking much about the future.
- **Protector** – protectors like to feel safe. They make decisions based with the future in mind, even if that means going without today.
- **Giver** – givers like to help people and feel generous, even if that means they are not always meeting their own needs.
- **Investor** – investors work hard to build for their future, even if that means being stressed because they are so focused on growth.



### IN THIS ISSUE OF Thrive ...

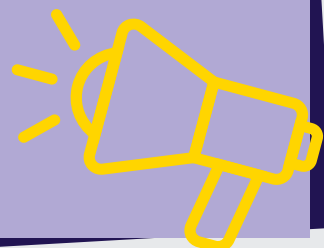
**3** Money makes the world go round but what's your view of money?

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## A big up to...

The Fostering Network in Wales Young People's Care Experience Advisory Board, Daniel Sinclair, Hollie-Mai, Brandon, Lee Phillips, Jane Hutt MS Minister for Social Justice and Alun Richards. Without your contributions, we just couldn't create this mag. Thank you!

By the way, if you'd like to influence what we do here at The Fostering Network and what goes into Thrive, you could join our Wales Young People's Care Experience Advisory Board. Email [charlotte.wooders@fostering.net](mailto:charlotte.wooders@fostering.net) to find out more.

The Fostering Network



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# Are you financially well-informed?

Where you go to school, what clothes you wear, what phone you pick, how you might get around, where you live – in all of these, and so many more, money plays a crucial role. Worrying about money can affect your mental health and your relationships so learning how to take care of it is an essential life skill.



**We are all in different financial positions, but it's important to know that, whatever your current financial status, things can change and you should not allow your finances to stop you having big dreams for the future.**

Understanding money, how to budget, where to get it, how to save it and what support is available to you is all very important. It's called being **financially capable**, and you really need to be. Your school may well be supporting you with this (and the new school curriculum for Wales means that they will have to – see [bit.ly/3Yeixem](https://bit.ly/3Yeixem)) and your foster carers are expected to help you manage your money. Financial capability should also be talked about in your pathway planning.

## Getting started...

Here are some great resources to help you improve your financial capability:

- A good place to start for all your money questions is MoneyHelper. It's a website run by the Money and Pensions Service and is packed full of useful info and resources: [bit.ly/3ImTiB9](https://bit.ly/3ImTiB9)
- The 'Your Money Matters' textbook is for young people aged 14-16 and covers topics including spending and saving, borrowing, debt, insurance, student finance and future planning: [bit.ly/3Hqj4DR](https://bit.ly/3Hqj4DR)
- The Share Foundation has a lot of useful resources aimed at young people in care, including The Stepladder of Achievement programme which looks at life skills and financial capability: [bit.ly/3ZS2bZR](https://bit.ly/3ZS2bZR)
- Children in Wales and Voices from Care Cymru have worked together on the Getting Ready Project, which focuses on building young people's financial capability. There are loads of great resources covering topics such as budgeting, benefits, housing and savvy shopping: [bit.ly/3WecYed](https://bit.ly/3WecYed)

## Did you know?

Young people who are looked after continuously for more than one year have a long-term savings account opened on their behalf by the government (who put £200 into each account when it is opened). The Share Foundation looks after these accounts until a young person turns 18, when access and control of the account transfers to them.

The savings plan might be a Junior ISA or a Child Trust Fund, but either way some savings will be in place for you. How much money is saved and where that money comes from might vary, although in Wales many fostering services are working towards an agreed amount of savings per child. Some fostering services take the savings directly from the allowance that foster carers receive, others contribute additional funds to help build the savings account for when a young person needs to access it. Foster carers and young people are encouraged to contribute to these accounts too.

Find out more at: [sharefound.org](https://sharefound.org)

## Off to uni? Make sure you 'tick the box'



If you have care experience and are applying for university, it's really important that you tick the box on your UCAS form which says that you have spent time in care. This will ensure that you get the support you are entitled to – possibly a lower offer, financial support and maybe a year-round place in university accommodation. Check out [classcymru.co.uk](https://classcymru.co.uk) for more information.

## Learn from Lee

The Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) was set up by the UK government to provide one place that covers everything from pocket money to pensions.

Lee Phillips works for MaPS in Wales, so she's a fantastic person to give us some top tips and advice about finances...

'Some people think they are rubbish at money, but just because you haven't been good with money in the past doesn't mean it has to be that way in the future. As you grow and your life changes, so might your attitude towards money.

'You need to think about the difference between the things that you want and need. This will help you budget, which is very important. We all make mistakes with money, but the sooner we can make these mistakes and learn from them, the less chance there is of making a mistake that could have a long-term impact on us.

'Everyone is worried about cost-of-living increases. I would suggest talking about money – the more we talk about it and break the taboo of talking about money, the more we can share our worries and get the support that we need.

'If you're struggling to keep up with bills and payments, don't worry – you're not alone. We help hundreds of thousands of people with similar worries every year. You can contact a specialist and find free, confidential advice now using our free MoneyHelper debt advice locator tool: [bit.ly/3Vod50c](https://bit.ly/3Vod50c)



Lee Phillips from MaPS

## Lee's top tips



- If you can **sort out the basics** with your money now, then you'll find it easier to hit those big money goals later down the line.
- **Start on the right track** – understand what money you've got coming in, what's going out and what you're entitled to and then put a budget together. Making a weekly budget can help you get a clearer picture of the costs you need to cover.
- **Read our guide** about supporting yourself financially: [bit.ly/3HpJT51](https://bit.ly/3HpJT51)
- If you can, try to **get into the savings habit**. Regularly putting money aside for your future life goals is a good habit to pick up and it gives you a pot to fall back on in an emergency, but most importantly it gets you used to saving.
- **Check out if you've got a Child Trust Fund** – there could be over £1,000 waiting for you to claim! Watch this video for more information: [bit.ly/3HtSyKO](https://bit.ly/3HtSyKO)
- **Be careful of scams** – scams can come in many forms, but all are designed to get hold of your money. It's important to know how to recognise a scam and what to do if you think you've been targeted or have fallen victim. Find out more at: [bit.ly/3HgEp8a](https://bit.ly/3HgEp8a)
- **Beware of loan sharks** – loan sharks seem friendly and helpful when you are in need, but this kind of lending is illegal, and it could cost you a lot more than you think. Remember you are not in trouble if you have borrowed money from a loan shark. Contact Stop Loan Sharks Wales for advice or to report a loan shark: [stoploansharkswales.co.uk](https://stoploansharkswales.co.uk)
- **Understand your credit score** – a credit score is a number that goes up or down depending on what you've done in the past and present with money, especially when it comes to loans and credit cards. Building a good credit score is important because it can affect your ability to borrow money or access products such as credit cards or loans. You can check your score for free and if it isn't in the best shape, there are things you can do to improve it: [bit.ly/3Htsajb](https://bit.ly/3Htsajb)
- If you want to **talk to someone about your finances**, speak to your foster carers, personal advisor or visit the MoneyHelper website.







## Spending too much

**Q** I'm 19, am on When I'm Ready (WiR), and have a job helping in a restaurant kitchen. The money is not too bad, but I'm struggling financially and am going into debt. I think the main problem is I love eating out and can't resist a new pair of trainers. Can you help?

**Matt says:** The important thing is that you have recognised you need to take action rather than going into further debt. It's very important that you talk to your foster carers or personal adviser and seek some help.

There are two main things for you to consider. The first is sorting out your debt and then you need to think about better money management for the future.

If you are in debt, doing nothing only makes it worse. Get your foster carers up to speed, agree the steps to clear the debt, make it a priority above all else and don't be tempted to use short term, high-cost credit. Use the debt advice service on MoneyHelper (see page five), but also check out the advice of the charity Citizen's Advice: [bit.ly/3D8ifNe](https://bit.ly/3D8ifNe)

Then you need to take some time to put together a budget. Again, your foster carers should be able to help you with this – and you will need to ask them to hold you accountable for the money you spend. Money management sounds boring, but it is an essential skill, as is knowing the difference between what you need and what you want. See page five for some more advice on budgeting.

These are tough steps, but with the right support you can do it!



# YOU ASKED, WE ANSWERED

## Matt's back to help with your problems



## Been scammed

**Q** I don't know what to do. I had a phone call which really sounded like it was from my bank. It turns out it wasn't and I gave them some personal details. Now money has been spent on my bank card. Help!

**Matt says:** Being scammed is a really horrible experience. The first thing you need to do is get in touch with your bank NOW. Don't wait, get in touch immediately. The bank will have a fraud support team who can help you. They will stop any further payments, issue you with a new card (and you can set a new password), and they will investigate what has happened.

As well as the MoneyHelper website mentioned on page five, Citizens Advice have a great section on their website about what to do if you've been scammed: [bit.ly/3QFO19S](https://bit.ly/3QFO19S)

This includes an explanation of how you might be able to get your money back. You can also ring Citizens Advice, Advicelink Cymru on 0800 702 2020 if you need more help with this.

Once you've rung the bank, you should speak to someone about being scammed – ideally your foster carers, but you can also ring Victim Support on 08 08 16 89 111. Falling for a scam is nothing to be ashamed of, it happens to thousands of people, but it can make you feel awful, so talking about it is important.

And remember, in the future never give your personal details to anyone if you are unsure who they are. Stay alert and stay safe!

**Q** I'm about to turn 18 and have decided to move to independent living. I can cook and generally care for myself, but am really worried about making good financial decisions. What advice would you give me?

**Matt says:** First of all, it's great that you are thinking about these things now. Making wise financial decisions is not easy, everyone makes mistakes and you mainly learn from experience. However, there are a lot of things you can do to help you prepare and to build up your confidence.

You should have a pathway plan mapping out the steps you need to take and the support you need as you head to independence. If you don't have a pathway plan, or it is not well developed, you should talk to your foster carers or personal adviser. You could also raise this at your next review.

With your foster carers or personal adviser make a list of the skills you need to help you make good decisions – budgeting, job applications, managing your bank account, cooking on a budget and so on. Against each item, decide what action you need to take and what support you will need. Your foster carer or personal adviser can help you identify who can support you.

Don't forget, at age 18 you will be a care leaver, and the local authority has a legal responsibility to provide you with support and financial assistance, so get a statement setting out your care leaver rights.

Good luck!

## Will I cope?



## Got a problem? Get an answer you can trust, right here



**Q** I have been living with my foster carers for three years now. I'm 15. The problem is that they won't give me enough pocket money because they say whatever they give me, they have to give to their 14-year-old son. I don't think that's fair. Is it?

**Matt says:** Every young person and every family has different views about pocket money, and it can create tension whether you are looked after or not. Here's some things that might help solve the situation:

- When you are part of a family (fostering or not) everyone needs to feel respected and treated fairly – and in your case your foster carers will want to be fair to you, but also their son as well. Every household will have different rules around pocket money, some families don't do it, some do, some families only offer financial reward in return for contributing to household chores. Every family is unique, there is no right or wrong, so why not ask for a family meeting to talk about finding some middle ground.
- What do you mean by 'enough'? Are there specific things you feel you need this pocket money for? You could put together a list of your needs and talk them through with your foster carers.
- If you feel that you would like more money, you could consider applying for a weekend job in your local area. There are rules on how many hours you can work at age 15, so your foster carers can help you find out more about this.
- If you speak to your foster carers and don't feel listened to, you could bring this up at your next review.

## Pocket money arguments



# Basic Income – ‘a safety blanket’

Read on to find out about the basic income pilot for care leavers in Wales and why the Welsh Government is investing so much money in it.

## What is the basic income pilot?

A basic income is a guaranteed amount of money given by the government to cover your basic needs. In this pilot it will be given to care leavers who are looked after by a Welsh local authority and will turn 18 between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023. It doesn't matter if you're in college or at work, and there are no strings attached!

In this pilot, you will get £1,280 per month (after tax) for two years. It goes into your bank account either monthly or twice a month.

## Why is the basic income being offered to care leavers?

The Welsh Government is trying to understand whether extending the time they support care leavers could have a positive impact on the success and ease of their entry into adulthood. They want to use the findings to help them offer the best possible support to care leavers in the future.

## What is it for?

The great thing about basic income is that it is guaranteed money and you can spend it on the things you need (and hopefully have some left over for little luxuries and saving).

Because you're receiving quite a lot of money each month, it's really important that you make sure you are as financially capable as possible (see pages four and five).

## How do I sign up?

Unfortunately, this is only a pilot at the moment, so there are strict rules for who is eligible (see above). If you fit the criteria, your social worker or personal adviser should be in touch before your 18th birthday. There are some other criteria, but don't worry though – your local authority or personal adviser will be able to put you in touch with someone to help you along the way.

If you do take part in the pilot, you will be asked to give some feedback about how it's working for you.

## How about the other money I get? Will that be affected?

The good news is that this money is on top of any other income you have from a job. However, it will affect any benefits you are on, so you should get some advice about this just to check that you would be better off on the basic income.

Citizens Advice Cymru is providing each local authority with a dedicated adviser for the young people who are eligible for the pilot. This adviser will work with the young person on the 'better off calculation' and will then be available to offer individual financial advice and support.

## I don't turn 18 until after 30 June 2023, why have I missed out on this?

The point of a trial, like this one, is to test whether it works with a small group of people – with the hope that it might then be offered to everyone. Sadly, this means that for some people they just miss the deadlines. There are other pots of money you might be entitled to, like the St David's Day Fund (see below), so have a conversation with your personal adviser or social worker to get some advice.

## St David's Day fund

The St David's Day fund supports young people with care experience, aged 16-24, to access opportunities that will lead them towards independent and successful lives. The money can be used for all sorts of things, such as payments for course equipment, driving lessons or financial support for setting up home. You should discuss the possibilities with your foster carer or personal adviser.

**Ask your social worker or personal adviser for more information.**



## Meet the Minister

Jane Hutt MS is Minister for Social Justice in the Welsh Government, which means she is the Minister responsible for the Basic Income pilot. We spoke to Jane about what she hopes the Basic Income pilot will achieve:

'We wanted to have a specific focus on young care leavers to understand the unique challenges they face entering into adulthood, and we felt added support for them as they turn 18 could provide a more solid foundation for them to build their adult life. We think that the basic income could give more opportunities and give young people a better chance to navigate the options ahead of them.'

'Unfortunately, we know that some young people will miss out on the pilot, but we are listening to as much feedback as possible, including attending meetings of care experienced young people.'

'It's early days, but there has been a very encouraging take up. The pilot is going to be very closely monitored to see how the basic income has helped with wellbeing, financial security and life chances. It's too soon to say if the pilot will be extended as it has to be evaluated. By the time this programme is completed, we'll be moving towards elections for the Senedd, so it will also depend on budgets and manifestos.'

'I hope this pilot is an indication of where we put our priorities. We want to see Wales develop as a fairer, more sustainable nation, and the welfare and wellbeing of our care experienced young people is crucial to that. This is part of our children's first agenda which says that children and young people shouldn't be disadvantaged because of their circumstances growing up.'

'For me, if the pilot is successful young people will be able to make choices in life, have sustained and improved mental health and wellbeing, have a feeling of independence and know that we have pride in them as young people growing up in Wales.'





# Real life:

## Finances



### Hollie-Mai

'Hi. I'm Hollie-Mai and I'm 20. I've been involved with social services since I was 14. I currently work in a youth centre. I'm also studying childhood psychology at the Open University. My plan is to be a safeguarding social worker.

'I can see that the basic income pilot money may give opportunities and you won't need to worry about money, which is amazing, but I think it might encourage people not to work. I would love the money – I'd go abroad as the furthest I've been is Blackpool.

'I work with a lot of young people, many of whom are care experienced, and I am concerned about the lack of support around the pilot because many of these young people will be very vulnerable. Their friends will know about it and ask for money or to go out for a meal. No is a hard word to say.

'Having all that money in the bank is too much of a temptation. If you blow it all in one go then you have nothing left for the rest of the month.

'We all have issues with money – I do, everyone I know does. The only financial education I got was from my foster carers. They had to teach me how to budget. It would be good if all foster carers could start doing lessons with their young people – show them how to cook, to clean, to budget.

'I would say to any young people: "Take any help you can get, even if it doesn't seem relevant. Be a cheapskate! Keep those you love close, listen to adults and do what you need to survive."

### Brandon

'Hi. I'm Brandon and I'm 18 and have been in care since I was four. I still live with my foster carer on When I'm Ready. I like to play rugby and going out with my friends. I'm in college studying plumbing and electrical. I hope to get an apprenticeship and then qualify as a plumber. I'd like to have my own company one day.

'I heard about the basic income scheme when the council contacted me, and I am very happy that I'm on it. The money is a big

help and gives more opportunities to save, have fun, buy nice things. Personally, I would prefer it to be less money each month and to last for three years so that it can see me through college. I'm not sure what I'd have done financially if I wasn't on the scheme, I probably would have got housing benefits.

'I have opened a separate account to save my money, because otherwise I might spend it! I am trying to save as much as I can each month for the two years, so that hopefully I can put a deposit down for something when I move out. That might even help me set up my own business.

'When I was younger my foster carer opened me another bank account to save money for clothes. She also helps me look at what I actually need to spend so I can work out what I can spend on enjoying myself.

'I would say to people younger than me to enjoy the money while you're younger, but as you approach 18, start saving money and don't spend your money on things you don't need.'

