

Overpayment of Income Support Benefits Review – Submission from Leaving Care Team

Please find the response from the Leaving Care Team's perspective in relation to the H&SS Scrutiny Panel review into Overpayments of Income Support Benefits:-

- The main cause of overpayments in respect of Care Leavers would be when there is a Change of Circumstance, i.e. loss/change of employment or a period of absence in employment due to sickness, which is not reported by the young adult as soon as it occurs and therefore, can incur overpayments.
- If a Care Leaver is in receipt of an overpayment of IS benefit this can cause them extreme anxiety & stress about how they will be able to repay this & they may look to borrow money from other sources i.e. family / friends, which leads to further debt.
- Care Leavers can often move between employment, this will in turn affects their IS claim if they do not submit the 'Change of Circumstances' form within the 14day timescale. There have been occasions whereby young people have had significant overpayments that need to be repaid due to not informing Customer Local Services about a loss of employment or sickness. This then has a negative impact on the young person in raising their anxiety & stress in relation to how they are going to repay if they are out of employment, what does that look like in respect of their weekly benefit amount & how will they be able to budget / buy food / pay rent, etc... The Leaving Care Team will look to provide emotional support as well as subsidise with food vouchers to try and alleviate some of this pressure for a period of time.