



**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE DIRECTORATE**

**GUIDE TO THE PAYMENT  
OF FOSTER CARERS**

**1 April 2021 - March 2022**

## **General Principles**

This guide is for foster carers and those who authorise payments to carers, it is a working tool for supervising social workers within the Fostering Service and for staff involved in the supervision of children in placement.

If you have any doubts or queries about your payments, please speak to your supervising social worker as soon as possible. It would be helpful if you would please read this guide to familiarise yourself with it and to understand it.

Payments can only be agreed by the person who has responsibility for the specific budgets, there should be no assumptions that some allowances will be paid. There must be discussion and then agreement with the budget holder.

The Local Authority is not allowed to make payments for the care of children where those needs are covered by statutory benefits. The individual needs of a child may mean that there are additional costs in caring for them. Every effort must be made, at the point of placement request, to identify whether the child and their parent/carer is already receiving Disability Living Allowance. Consideration should be given to a child's eligibility for Disability Living Allowance and the Carer's Allowance which is a benefit that fosters carers may be entitled to claim if the child is in receipt of DLA at the higher or middle rate. This allowance will be used to enhance the quality of life for the child receiving the allowance. The social worker for the child should help you in making an application for this benefit.

Fostering allowances (the regular weekly allowance) are to cover the costs of caring for a child or young person. In addition, there are a number of allowances which can cover specific costs.

Fostering allowances are non-taxable.

Fees are reward payments. They are paid to carers recognising their skills in caring for children and young people and these payments are taxable.

## **Fostering Allowances**

### **The Regular Weekly Allowance**

All approved foster carers will receive a Regular Weekly Allowance in respect of each child or young person they care for.

The Regular Weekly Allowance covers:

- Home maintenance including heating, refurbishment etc.
- Food and clothing
- Pocket money
- Normal travel associated with any child within a family, including to and from local school
- Contact with parents, siblings etc
- Involvement in clubs and recreational activities
- Attendance at review meetings etc
- Keeping a diary of events and memories for the child

The Regular Weekly Allowance is weighted so that it assumes there are always some additional costs incurred in fostering activities.

The percentages attributed to each area are an indicative guide and not intended to be fully prescriptive.

### **Regular Weekly Allowance rates**

<b>Age group</b>	<b>0 – 4 years</b>	<b>5 – 10 years</b>	<b>11 – 15 years</b>	<b>16 – 17 years</b>
Rate per week	£141.82	£156.45	£179.13	£217.77

The rates are in excess of the following 2020/21 National Minimum Allowance for Foster Carers announced by the Department of Education:

#### **National Minimum Allowance:**

	<b>Age 0 to 2</b>	<b>Age 3 to 4</b>	<b>Age 5 to 10</b>	<b>Age 11 to 15</b>	<b>Age 16 to 17</b>
Rest of England	£134	£138	£152	£173	£202

### **Birthday, Summer Period and Annual Festivity Allowances**

These allowances are paid once for each child and if the child moves in the relevant period the payment will be transferred to the relevant carer. One week's extra Regular Weekly Allowance will be paid in the payment prior to a child's birthday and one week's Regular Weekly Allowance will also be made by 10 December to cover the festive break.

The following Summer Period Allowance will be paid over a six week period in the summer to cover the school and college summer holiday period. Please note that this is not an actual holiday payment but is to help assist with activities etc. during the six week break.

It has been agreed to pay this allowance weekly over a six week period in order to prevent significant overpayments should a child move on.

<b>Allowance per week</b>	<b>0 – 4 years</b>	<b>5 – 10 years</b>	<b>11 – 15 years</b>	<b>16 – 17 years</b>
Birthday	£141.82	£156.45	£179.13	£217.77
Annual festivities	£141.82	£156.45	£179.13	£217.77
Summer period (per week for 6 weeks)	£47.27	£52.15	£59.71	£72.59

### Weekly Pocket Money Rates

These are provided as a guide only. In order to help with preparation for independence, we recommend that children and young people receive their pocket money and are encouraged to save.

<b>Age group</b>	<b>0 – 4 years</b>	<b>5 – 10 years</b>	<b>11 – 15 years</b>	<b>16 – 17 years</b>
Per week	£2.00	£5.00	£10.00	£15.00

### Travel

The Regular Weekly Allowance contains an element for everyday transport arrangements for children including activities, local school runs, appointments and contact etc. This equates to £10.00 per week for children aged 0-10 years and £17.50 per week for children aged 11-17.

Any essential travel costs that are in addition to the everyday transport covered by the RWA will be met for all children in placement. The rate of 45p per mile will be paid for agreed mileage where the foster carers use their own vehicle and should be reclaimed via a weekly mileage claim form.

In order to reflect the contribution to the week's travel costs already received as part of the RWA, this amount (i.e. £10.00/£17.50 per child in placement) is deducted from the week's mileage claim. Foster carers with more than one child in placement receive the RWA for each child so the deduction is also per child in placement.

Please make sure that claims for reimbursement of mileage are submitted promptly as if they are over **3 months** old they will not be accepted.

### Discretionary payments

The Regular Weekly Allowance should cover all of the things that this previously covered with the exceptions of Personal Needs.

### Personal Needs

To meet the needs of a black and ethnic minority child this allowance is either a one-off payment of up to £50.00 or an extra weekly allowance of £2.50.

For serious and persistent cases of bedwetting and soiling (usually 4 nights per week or more) an extra allowance can be paid up to a maximum of £8.50 per week.

### Additional Allowances:

The allowances need to be applied for by your supervising social worker or the social worker who has responsibility for the child in placement. It is the decision of the budget holder as to whether these additional allowances will be paid and to what level.

- School Uniform – It is expected that this will be purchased as part of the general upkeep of the child's clothing from the weekly allowance. Where a child has moved schools and there is an exceptionally high cost of branded uniform from a specialist supplier, a small grant towards this needs to be agreed by the Team Manager, up to a maximum total of £80.
- Immediate Clothing Allowance – every attempt should be made for the child's clothing to be brought from home when he/she enters placement. Where there is no clothing or inappropriate clothing, up to £80 can be paid for an Immediate Clothing Allowance for children aged 0 – 10 and £150 for children aged 11+. We would not expect to pay this allowance once a child is being looked after and needs to move placement on a temporary or permanent basis. This payment must be agreed by a Manager in the Fostering and Adoption Service.
- Disturbance Allowance – when a placement is arranged and made by the EDT outside of normal office hours, a Disturbance Allowance can be paid of £31.50 at the discretion of the budget holder.

### Equipment

Equipment, including safety equipment, can be provided. Please discuss this with your supervising social worker. Agreement must be given in advance by the budget holder before any equipment is purchased.

### Fees to Foster Carers

The fostering service has a fee scheme to recognise and reward carers for their skills, experience and training. There are 3 levels in the fee payment scheme – Level I, Level II and Level III.

Approval at a different level will depend on:

- Meeting the TSD Standards
- The carers assessed care skills
- The length of experience of the carer
- The training the carer has undertaken
- The placement occupancy of the household
- The contribution the carer makes to the development of the service

Carers will receive a fee linked to their level of approval.

<b>Level I</b>	Fee £72.66 per week, plus RWA
<b>Level II</b>	Fee £140.28 per week, plus RWA
<b>Level III</b>	Fee £270.06 per week, plus RWA

### Retainers

A retainer payment which will be a payment of the fee (according to level on the structure) will be paid to mainstream carers where they are available and willing to take a placement but there is no placement in situ.

The retainer fee is only payable for a maximum of 8 weeks in one financial year. A retainer fee is not payable to carers who are only approved to offer respite.

On some occasions when significant concerns have been raised in respect of a carers practice, it may be necessary to suspend the placement of children while these issues are dealt with. In such circumstances the retainer will continue to be paid for up to 6 weeks from the end of a child's placement. Should the matter remain unresolved after 6 weeks, the continuation of payment will be reviewed.

### Specialist Foster Carer Scheme

The Specialist Foster Carer Scheme is currently £434.28 (first child) but continues to be phased out as current arrangements draw to an end and will not be paid when existing children move on or the status of their placement changes.

### Single Child Placement Scheme

The fee of £434.28 is paid to approved carers for placements under this scheme.

### Contract Carers

This provides short break placements for children with permanent and substantial disabilities. Contract carers will provide placements for up to 8 children on a rolling programme. For this they will receive a fee of £543.69 per week and a proportional amount of the RWA determined by the number of days/nights stayed.

### Shared Carers

Shared Carers are approved as Level 2 foster carers and provide short breaks for children with disabilities. Shared Carers will be paid £4.40 per hour. Payments slips need to be submitted within 3 months.

### Foster to Adopt Carers

These are carers who are approved to adopt and then approved as foster carers for a specific named child/children. In this way children who are likely to be placed for adoption can be placed with them to avoid another separation and move. These carers will be on the level 1 fee and allowances and will continue to receive this allowance until the Placement Order is granted and the child's placement is agreed by the Panel and ADM, when they will be placed under Adoption Agency regulations.

### Emergency Foster Care Scheme

These carers will receive a weekly fee of £550 and £210 per week for a second/third child placed and the proportionate and relevant RWA for the time a child is in placement with them.

### Parent and Child placements

Foster carers providing a parent and child placement will receive £700 per week. This is split into the following elements:

Regular Weekly Allowance (RWA)	£141.82
Fee	£558.18

### Adolescent Care Team

Carers on the Adolescent Care Team scheme are caring for young people who are moving from residential placements or other independent care provision. The carers will receive a fee of £406 per child plus the RWA.

### Placement Introduction Expenses

For placement introduction expenses including visiting children in hospital etc. an allowance of £10.00 per occasion is payable. This must be agreed in advance with the budget holder.

### Day Care

Day care can be paid to cover childcare when carers attend training, attend panel, attend foster carer reviews, take children to health appointments and transport or host contact. All day care will be paid at a rate of £15 per day for up to 4 hours and £30 per day for over 4 hours per child irrespective of a carer's level on the career structure.

### Approved Support Care

Approved Support Care (formerly known as respite) may occasionally be necessary to give either a child or young person or the foster carers a break. Clearly such arrangements need to be agreed as in the best interests of the child, part of their care plan and discussed by all of those who have responsibility for the child. Wherever possible, we would expect carers to use their natural support networks, especially when the placement is a permanent one.

When a child goes to another carer for Approved Support Care, the carers providing that care will receive the Regular Weekly Allowance and proportionate fee where applicable for the number of nights the child is with them. The main carer will continue to be paid the Regular Weekly Allowance and fee for the first 14 nights in a financial year. For any nights exceeding 14 they will not receive the Regular Weekly Allowance and fee.

These Approved Support Care placements are often subject to change at short notice etc. and to avoid overpayment situations we will aim to pay Approved Support Care payments one week in arrears.

The Fostering Service will try hard to make arrangements for Approved Support Care when it is needed. Please give us as much notice as you can to help us to facilitate this.

### Payments during a child in placement's absence

- When a child is away on a school trip the Regular Weekly Allowance and fee will continue to be paid.
- When a child is hospitalised the Regular Weekly Allowance and fee will continue for the first two weeks. Beyond that there will need to be discussion and agreement with the budget holder.
- When a child goes missing from care the Regular Weekly Allowance and fee will continue to be paid for the first three nights.
- When a child or young person is having an overnight with family members (as part of a rehabilitation plan or the child's care plan) then the Regular Weekly Allowance will continue to be paid up to a maximum of 25 nights in a year.

## Friends and Family Carers (Connected Persons), Immediate and Emergency Placement (Regulation 24 Placements)

When a child is placed with the above carers, fostering payments will commence from the date when the placement is approved for 16 weeks and in exceptional circumstances e.g. justifiable delays in the assessment process, payments may be extended to 24 weeks. Payments will commence subject to the relevant Finance Forms being received by the Central Payments Team from the Social Worker making the placement.

If after 16 weeks (or 24 weeks in exceptional circumstances) the Assessment is not presented to the Fostering Panel, payments will cease as the carers will no longer be approved foster carers.

Payments will continue to be made if the Assessment is presented to Panel and the Agency Decision Maker decides on the recommendation of Panel for the Friends and Family carers (Connected Persons) to continue to be approved as a carer.

However, if after 16 weeks (or 24 weeks) the Agency Decision Maker decides not to approve the carers as foster carers they have 28 days in which they can appeal the decision to the Independent Review Mechanism and during this time payments will continue. If an appeal is made payments will also continue until the conclusion of the Independent Review Mechanism process and a final decision on approval as foster carers is taken by the Agency Decision Maker.

## Children Placed under Child Arrangement Orders (previously known as Residence Orders) and Special Guardianship Orders

Fostering allowances and fees cease after a Child Arrangement Order or Special Guardianship Order has been made by the Courts. In some situations it will be of benefit to the child and carer for the child to cease being looked after and be a permanent member of the family by way of an SGO. Foster Carers thinking of applying for a Special Guardianship Order should talk to their supervising Social Worker/Child's Social Worker. Your supervising Social Worker or the child's Social Worker can refer requests to the Central Payments Team who will make a financial assessment for Foster Carers thinking about applying for a Special Guardianship Order. Carers may in these circumstances be considered for assessment for an SGO allowance as part of the SGO support plan.

### Foster Carer Recruitment Incentive Fee

£500 on approval

## **General Financial Advice and Information**

### Payments

The Fostering Social Worker will set up all payments in respect of the child placed with you via the Central Payments Team (01228 227009 / 221272). However, payments will not commence until the relevant notification is received by the Central Payments Team. Any queries should be directed to the Central Placements Team in Carlisle. Any queries regarding additional payments to meet a child's needs should be raised with the child's Social Worker.

For existing Foster Carers, payments will be paid directly into your bank or building society account.

All new Foster Carers, payments are made by the Direct Banking System. This is our only payment method to avoid delays in receiving your payments.

Payments will be made into your chosen bank / building society account usually on the Friday of each week. The weekly payment period is from a Monday to Sunday (inclusive).



## Remittance Slips

The remittance slip will show a breakdown of allowances paid for the child placed with you and fees paid to you as a Foster Carer. The remittance slips will be sent to carers via e-mail and not in any other format. The remittance slips should be retained for your annual tax return.

## Overpayments

Sometimes overpayments of allowances may occur due to circumstances changing quickly. Overpayments are recovered as soon as possible from ongoing allowances (if applicable) or by immediate repayment. However, if you anticipate difficulty with this, please contact the Central Payments Team promptly to explore alternative methods of repayment (01228 227009 / 221272).

## Children Aged 16+

Under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, Cumbria County Council is financially responsible for the maintenance and accommodation costs for young people 16 – 18. Young single parents and those with disabilities may still be eligible for additional benefits through the Job Centre Plus. Pathway Social Workers and the Cumbria Children's Information Services can offer advice.

Cumbria County Council also offer the opportunity for young people between the ages of 16-21 to access a service called Homestays which supports young people wishing to become more independent who are attending Education, Training or Employment and are looking to obtain a supported lodging placement as opposed to a Foster placement.

Anyone interested in this service should contact their local Homestays Advisor attached to the Fostering Service.

Foster Carers have the opportunity to be both Foster carers and Homestays Providers if it is deemed viable for both parties.

## Aged 18 years

A young person legally ceases to be 'looked after' when they reach 18 and therefore their fostering status and fostering allowances end. If they remain in full time education, then the allowances will continue until the end of July following their leaving school/ college. However, many young people will rightly remain with their former foster carers and may need some ongoing support. The placement may continue (as a supportive lodging arrangement through the Fostering Services), but financial matters MUST be resolved well in advance of the young person's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit may also be claimed and the Leaving Care Adviser and Homestays Advisor will liaise with the relevant District Council and the Welfare Rights Service to ensure that the young person and their carers receive all their benefits and entitlements.

In May 2014 the Government offered the opportunity for young people and carers to continue their placement if they so wished. This is called a Staying Put arrangement and has a different payment structure to the Fostering. The payment for these placements is as follows, £65.03 per week rent element, £80.01 per week support element, and a discretionary support payment of £20.02 per week. Each Staying Put carer is only expected to give 7-10 hours of care in a week (this will be reflected in payments to carers) as the young person is deemed a young adult. Each case is also reviewed on an individual basis and non- discriminatory. Those identified as requiring the Adult services will be offered Shared Lives, this is a mirror image of Staying Put in terms of support payment and applying for housing benefit but there may be an additional payment from adult services which will be determined on their individual needs and be monitored by the Adult Services and not the Fostering Service.

## Insurance

- All foster carers should ensure that their car insurance extends to cover use for business purposes. The County Council's all risk policy specifically excludes motor vehicles; therefore foster carers should be sure that all vehicles on their premises, or under their control, are insured. If this results in an additional premium, the County Council will take responsibility for payment of the difference in cost when provided with this evidence.
- Damage/theft to property. Foster carers should make a claim under their own household policy; if this is not successful then a claim should be made through the authority's insurance claims. It is important that you report any incidents which may result in a claim being made as soon as possible. Should an excess be payable, this must be agreed by the budget holder and evidence provided.

## Membership of Fostering Network:

Individual foster carers' membership of the Foster Network will be paid for by the Fostering Service.

## Advice and Mediation

"The independent Advice and Mediation Service for our foster carers is provided by Fostering Network. They provide foster carers with advice, support, mediation, and advocacy. This can be as a result of an allegation being made, a foster carer needing support at Fostering Panel or the Independent Review Mechanism panel (IRM), a foster carer wanting to make a complaint or just having a dispute with their Supervising Social Worker or the child's Social Worker. This service is free to carers and Fostering Network can be contacted on 01772 456444, please email [louise.horne@fostering.net](mailto:louise.horne@fostering.net), see below for further contacts for Fostering Network

The member's helpline - 020 7401 9582

24-hour Legal helpline – 0345 013 5004

Stress helpline - 0345 074 2799