

Fostering Allowances 2026-27

4th April 2026 - 3rd April 2027

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1. Allowances

The table below sets out the allowances paid to all Foster Carers to cover the cost of caring for a looked after child. The minimum amount to be paid has been determined by the Department for Education (DfE) and Staffordshire County Council now pays the same, or more than that rate.

AGE RANGE	Weekly Allowance
0 - 1	£178.18
2 - 4	£182.24
5 - 10	£201.00
11 - 15	£239.57
16+	£267.50

Guide to what allowances cover and how they should be allocated

The fostering allowances paid to foster carers covers the cost of caring for a child at home. The percentage guidance chart below gives an indication to the foster carers of the way this allowance is made up, and the amount of money allocated to each element. This is intended as a helpful guide for foster carers and to assist them in the use of the allowance.

AGE	FOOD	CLOTHING	TRANSPORT	PERSONAL/ HOUSEHOLD	TOTAL
0 - 1	34%	22%	8%	36%	100%
	£60.58	£39.20	£14.25	£64.16	£178.18
2 - 4	34%	22%	8%	36%	100%
	£61.96	£40.09	£14.58	£65.61	£182.24
5 - 10	32%	26%	7%	35%	100%
	£64.32	£52.26	£14.07	£70.35	£201.00
11 - 15	32%	26%	11%	31%	100%
	£76.66	£62.29	£26.35	£74.27	£239.57

AGE	FOOD	CLOTHING	TRANSPORT	PERSONAL/ HOUSEHOLD	TOTAL
16 +	30%	26%	9%	35%	100%
	£80.25	£69.55	£24.08	£93.63	£267.50

The following lists the items that the allowance is expected to cover. It is a guide only and not an exhaustive list.

- Food costs
- School dinners/lunch money
- Clothing/footwear (including replacing regular school uniform items)
- Costs of clubs' clothing (e.g. Cubs, Brownies etc)
- Nappies and other baby items
- Personal self-care items
- Pocket money
- Toys/books/games etc
- Education material costs
- Leisure/family day trips/hobbies/activities/entertainment
- School trips/activities
- Life-story work materials and costs
- Transport costs to attend school, support contact and attend meetings
- Household costs, utilities e.g. additional gas, electric, washing
- Household wear and tear e.g. to furniture, carpets and household items
- Luggage costs.

2. Clothing

There is an expectation that the clothing element of the allowance is fully spent on the child, ensuring that they are well clothed while with the foster carer(s), and when they leave their care.

When the child/young person has sufficient clothing, the allowance should be placed in a saving's account for future needs. This should also be discussed with the child/young person depending on their age and understanding.

The clothing allowance indicated is the minimum that can be used flexibly to purchase items directly by foster carer(s) as necessary for young children and be provided to older children and young people on a weekly/monthly basis, or as agreed.

It is expected that in order to encourage young people to develop budgeting skills that they should be given more responsibility for spending some or all of their clothing allowance. When funds for children and young people's basic clothes have been purchased (or funds allocated) e.g. underwear, shoes, school uniform, the young person should be allowed to purchase their own clothes. It is expected that carers should monitor this by seeing receipts or at least, verifying that clothes have been bought and by recording the purchase in the daily records.

It is recommended that foster carers set up a separate bank account for the clothing money. Foster carers should retain receipts of purchases.

3. Pocket Money

Pocket money should be given to children for their own use and not to pay for regular entertainment, clothes or personal toiletries.

It is recommended that foster carers record on their daily log when they have given a child pocket money and the amount given. They may also wish to record what this money has been spent on, particularly in the case of younger children.

Primary school aged children would be expected to be paid their pocket money weekly, preferably on a set day. Older children may prefer to receive their pocket money and any other allowances given to them for personal toiletries and entertainment and clothing, monthly

and paid into their personal savings account. They may also wish to do this with some of their birthday and Christmas allowances. This will depend on their maturity and should be discussed with them and their social worker.

The amount of pocket money must be clarified at the start of a placement and discussed at the placement planning meeting. Although the minimum amounts for each age group have been defined (see table below), foster carers are free to pay additional pocket money if they wish to. An increase in pocket money should be linked to the child or young person's birthday to mark their increasing age.

Table 1 - Pocket money (weekly payment)

Age	Pocket Money
0 - 4	£2.75
5 - 6	£3.00
7	£3.30
8	£3.75
9	£4.10
10	£4.35
11	£5.05
12	£6.40
13	£7.65
14	£9.05
15	£10.80
16	£12.95
17 and over	£14.85

Table 2 - Birthday allowances for children at school or unemployed

Age	Birthdays and Festivals
0 - 1	£172.37
2 - 4	£176.29
5 - 10	£194.28
11 - 15	£231.80
16 - 17	£258.82

When a child or young person has a short break there is an expectation that the short break carer will pay the child's pocket money (pro rata). If the amount is paid monthly into a savings account, then some discussion will need to occur as to who is responsible for payment or part payment.

4. Children in Care Long Term Savings

Foster carers are expected to put aside weekly amounts of the personal allowance for every child as savings up until the point they have been in your care for 12 months. Post 12 months Staffordshire County Council will progress the opening of an account for all children with the Shared Trust Foundation. At the point the account is opened the recommended savings amounts shown below will be deducted at source and will show on a foster carer's remittance.

The following weekly savings amounts are recommended:

- Up to 10 years old - £5.00 per week
- 11 - 15 years old - £10.00 per week
- 16 / 17 years old - £15.00 per week

Initial Placement Expenses

A payment of £25.00 to cover initial placement expenses is made for those children being admitted into foster care. This will enable carers

to purchase essential items. The money will be brought at the point of placement by the placing social worker and will not be deducted from the weekly maintenance allowance or any subsequent clothing allowance.

Supplementary Payments

When children are placed and additional needs have been identified within the child's placement plan, supplementary payments may be authorised.

Supplementary payments are discretionary and need to be authorised through the child's social worker/team manager.

Food - Any special dietary requirements should be discussed at the Placement Planning Meeting and included in the child's Placement Plan and agreement reached if a supplementary allowance is required.

Clothing - Children may not have suitable clothes when they first come into care and an initial clothing allowance may be available.

The child's Social Worker and Team Manager are responsible for the approval of a supplementary clothing allowance. Approval and authorisation of the amount agreed must be in place before any supplementary items are purchased. This should be agreed as part of the placement planning meeting and included in the child's Placement Plan.

Foster carers should ensure that unrealistic standards are not set for children returning home, e.g. the purchase of expensive/designer clothes.

As a guide, children should have the following items as a minimum requirement. The placement planning process, at the beginning of the child's placement, provides an opportunity to discuss and agree if supplementary items of clothing are required.

5. Minimum Clothing Standards

Babies 6 vests, 5 daytime outfits, 6 sleep suits, 3 cardigans, 6 pairs socks, 1 pair gloves, 1 warm hat, warm outdoor suit.

Supplementary clothing allowance - up to £120



Toddlers 6 vests, 6 pants, 6 socks, 5 daytime outfits, 2 jumpers/cardigans, 1 pair shoes, 1 pair trainers or sandals, hat, gloves, coat, 3 pairs of pyjamas/nightdress, 1 dressing gown, 1 pair slippers.

Supplementary clothing allowance - up to £150

Children aged 5-10 years coat or waterproof, 6 pants, 6 vests or T-shirts, 6 pairs socks, 5 daytime outfits, 3 pairs pyjamas/nightdress, 1 dressing gown, 1 pair slippers, 1 pair shoes, 1 pair trainers, 1 pair of Wellingtons, gloves, hat, PE kit including swimwear, school uniform, 1 suitcase/holdall.

Supplementary clothing allowance - up to £180

Young people aged 11-16 years 7 pairs pants, 3 bras, 6 pairs socks/tights, 6 T-shirts, 5 daytime outfits, 1 coat/jacket, 1 pair shoes, 1 pair trainers, 3 pairs pyjamas/nightdress, 1 dressing gown, 1 pair slippers, gloves, hat, PE kit including swimwear, school uniform, 1 suitcase/holdall

Supplementary clothing allowance - up to £220

In exceptional circumstances the placement planning meeting may identify that an additional resource is required based on the individual needs of the child being placed. Any additional resource requires the agreement of the child's Team Manager before purchasing.

School Uniform

School uniform, where needed, should be considered over and above the initial clothing allowance. A supplementary allowance can be agreed by the child's social work Team Manager to cover some additional school uniform expenses.

As a guide, an additional allowance will be paid to cover the expense of providing uniform for children recently placed with foster carers and/or when children need to move to a new school.

It is expected that foster carers will be able to provide standard items of school clothing and footwear for children who have been placed with them for over three months. The supplementary allowance is intended to pay for the more expensive items required by individual schools e.g. items such as blazers, school logo-branded items of clothing and sport's kits, if required.

6. Transport

For school and family time related journeys that the child needs to attend and that take place outside the foster carer's locality, a supplementary mileage allowance will be paid at 45p a mile. This should be agreed in advance and be recorded as part of the Placement Plan agreement with the child's social worker and team manager. Additionally, when the foster carer is required to attend meetings regarding the child that are outside the foster carer's locality/school catchment area, supplementary mileage will be paid at 45p a mile. All normal family mileage to see friends, attend clubs, routine doctors/dental appointments etc. is covered within the personal allowances for the child.

7. Personal Items

The child's weekly personal allowance covers personal items such as toys and toiletries as well as leisure activities such as swimming, gymnastics and other activity groups. For African or African/Caribbean children and young people, an additional allowance of **£5.00** (12 years and under) and **£7.00** (13 years and over) will be paid per week, to purchase creams/oils for skin and hair care.

8. Household Equipment

The personal allowance covers extra electricity, gas or other fuel, normal wear and tear on household items, maintenance and redecoration of the foster child's bedroom. Basic equipment for the use of children and young people is provided to foster carers by the Fostering Service.

The equipment that can be provided with the agreement of the Fostering Social Worker and Team Manager is as follows

For babies and infants

- Cot and mattress
- Buggy and cover
- Stairgate x2

- Fireguard
- Highchair
- Bedding 6 cot sheets, 3 cot blankets
- Car seat
- Feeding equipment
- Bath and bath set, changing mat
- Two towels
- Baby monitor

Other children/young people

- Bed
- Bedding 2 pillows, duvet, 2 sheets, 2 duvet covers, 4 pillowcases, waterproof cover,
- Two bath and two hand towels
- Chest of drawers,
- Wardrobe,
- Desk and chair.

NB - This is considered a 'start-up package' to assist foster carers and they would then be expected to appropriately maintain equipment. Consideration will be given at each new placement as to whether additional items are required. This would need to be agreed at the Placement Planning meeting, or in exceptional circumstances, with the Fostering Team Manager.

The funding of the 'start-up package' will be based on the most cost-effective purchases available at the time. The Fostering Social Worker will need discuss with their Team Manager about the agreed set cost.

In some circumstances, foster carers may wish to purchase a more expensive item and fund the difference in price themselves. The fostering team manager has the discretion to consider such requests on an individual basis. This would not be agreed for some items which can be re-used in other placements.

9. Birthday / Festival / Holiday Payments

Birthday

A grant, equal to one week's child's allowance payment appropriate to the age of the child will be made automatically for a child's birthday. The birthday allowance is provided to enable foster carers to purchase a gift(s) and to provide a contribution towards the cost of celebrations.

Christmas/Festivals

A grant equal to one week's child allowance payment appropriate to the age of the child will be made at Christmas, and payable for all children in foster placements. The Christmas/Festival Allowance is provided to purchase a gift(s) and to provide a contribution towards to cost of celebrations. If the allowance is required for an alternative religious festival, a request should be made via the child's Social Worker.

Summer Holiday Grant

An annual summer holiday grant is paid as an exceptional payment and is equivalent to two weeks' personal allowance per child (age related). This is provided to the foster carer as a contribution towards a holiday or for an equivalent number of day trips during the summer holiday period.

Family holidays are important social events that can build lifelong memories, and foster carers are expected to include the children that they foster when planning their family holidays. The County Council recognises that families have different priorities and family budgets when choosing holidays and this summer holiday grant is reflective of the available resources and the need to set appropriate budgets within Children's Services. Foster carers should take this into account when planning their holidays and activities.

The summer holiday grant is paid in **July** in advance of the summer holidays to foster carers and should there be circumstances where this allowance is not fully used e.g. due to the child returning home or moving placement, then the foster carer should return the summer holiday grant.

10. Adoption Introductions

A supplementary payment can be agreed up to **£10.00 per day** (maximum of £50 per week), hospitality payment when foster carers facilitate introductions between children and adoptive parents. This payment will be discussed and agreed by the Fostering Team Manager.

In exceptional circumstances, further expenses can be agreed to facilitate unusual arrangements that will promote the introductions and the needs of the child. This will be agreed by the Team Manager to support the requirements of the child's plan.

11. Educational Trips

The child's personal weekly allowance covers educational and social events, for example, school day trips, school discos etc.

In exceptional circumstances, the responsible Manager for the child's social work team may agree to fund certain educational events such as field trips, where for example, this is part of the young person's curriculum and/or course work. Details should be discussed by the foster carers with the child's social worker in advance of the submission dates.

Additionally, the responsible Manager may also agree to pay for one major school trip in the course of a child's school life. The child's social work Team Manager must seek their Manager's approval beforehand.

12. Miscellaneous

With the prior agreement from the child's social work team manager, funding can be agreed for:

- Essential documents including a child's passport and birth certificate
- School photographs.

In exceptional circumstances a nursery/after school placement may be funded if this had been agreed by the child's social work team manager as part of a child's placement plan.

13. SGO Allowances

Any decision to maintain financial support under Special Guardianship for Foster Carers must be approved by the Fostering, Adoption and Special Guardianship Resource Panel. Any such arrangement must be clearly defined in the Special Guardianship Support Plan and will be subject to annual review as per the regulations and will be subject to a financial assessment. Whilst any regular financial support provided to former foster carers under SGO, is equivalent to our weekly age-related fostering allowance previously received by the carers, we do not match those discretionary allowances that are solely for foster carers such as Birthday/Christmas and Holiday allowances and minus any reduction as indicated in the financial assessment.

14. Payment for Skills - Outline of the Scheme

Introduction

The Payment for Skills scheme was introduced in 2001 and is designed to recognise the range of knowledge; competency and experience that foster carers possess, with carers paid an additional fee for each child in placement by reference to their competency.

The acquisition and subsequent maintenance of the necessary skills in relation to higher levels of payment is assessed by the allocated fostering social worker by reference to detailed examination of the evidence of competency level required.

Foster carers are required to demonstrate and maintain evidence of their competency through the collection of practice evidence presented within a personal portfolio. Foster carer's portfolios are regularly and consistently audited by the supervising social worker and their manager.

There are four levels of payment

Foundation Level - The carer receives the fostering allowance for the child in placement.

Accredited Level - The carer receives the fostering allowance for the child in placement and an additional fee for the carer's skills

Advanced Level - The carer receives the fostering allowance for the child in placement and a higher-level additional fee for the carer's skills.

Advanced+ Level - The carer receives the fostering allowance for the child in placement and a higher-level additional fee for the carer's skills.

15. Fostering Rates - Payment for Skills

Level 1

AGE RANGE	WEEKLY ALLOWANCE	WEEKLY FEE	TOTAL
0 - 1	178.18	-	178.18
2 - 4	182.24	-	182.24
5 - 10	201.00	-	201.00
11 - 15	239.57	-	239.57
16+	267.50	-	267.50

Level 2

AGE RANGE	WEEKLY ALLOWANCE	WEEKLY FEE	TOTAL
0 - 1	178.18	56.14	£234.32
2 - 4	182.24	57.26	£239.50
5 - 10	201.00	66.36	£267.36
11 - 15	239.57	91.28	£330.85
16+	267.50	104.30	£371.80

Level 3

AGE RANGE	WEEKLY ALLOWANCE	WEEKLY FEE	TOTAL
0 - 1	178.18	136.85	£315.03
2 - 4	182.24	138.11	£320.35
5 - 10	201.00	162.89	£363.89
11 - 15	239.57	210.91	£450.48
16+	267.50	234.57	£502.07

Level 4

AGE RANGE	WEEKLY ALLOWANCE	WEEKLY FEE	TOTAL
0 - 1	178.18	305.62	£483.80
2 - 4	182.24	308.42	£490.66
5 - 10	201.00	363.72	£564.72
11 - 15	239.57	363.72	£603.29
16+	267.50	412.23	£679.73

16. Disability Short-break Payments

You will be paid the following amount depending on the length of the short break.

Break Duration	Payment	Break Duration	Payment
Intros/Meetings	£20.40	Up to 84 hours	£238.15
Up to 6 hours	£40.61	Up to 96 hours	£263.51
Up to 12 hours	£60.85	Up to 108 hours	£288.71
Up to 24 hours	£81.17	Up to 120 hours	£314.08
Up to 36 hours	£121.56	Up to 132 hours	£339.50
Up to 48 hours	£162.14	Up to 144 hours	£364.78
Up to 60 hours	£187.43	Up to 156 hours	£390.13
Up to 72 hours	£212.84	Up to 168 hours	£415.42

In addition, where agreement has been given by the area social work team to cover transport costs, the mileage will be paid at the rate of 45p per mile. Any equipment required will be provided through the Family Placement Social Worker, in conjunction with the specialist OT services.

17. Intensive Fostering Fee Levels

Fees paid to carers who are approved to provide placements for specific intensive fostering programmes - resilience care, fostering disability full-time short break fostering.

A fostering fee is paid at a higher rate is outside the Payment for Skills scheme. The programme offers solo placements to children and young people who require intensive support. Each programme has individual criteria that the carers are required to meet.

Age Range	Weekly Allowance	Fee	Total
0 - 1	£178.18	£613.17	£791.35
2 - 4	£182.24	£613.17	£795.41
5 - 10	£201.00	£613.17	£814.17
11 - 15	£239.57	£613.17	£852.74
16 - 17	£267.50	£613.17	£880.67
Short Breaks	-	£318.71	£318.71

Turnaround and Full-time EDS Foster Carers

These carers have specific approval and meet the individual requirements of the respective schemes, they both have a period on rota and time off and are paid an availability fee of **£613.17** per week.

Foster Carers with relevant previous experience who join the Staffordshire Fostering Service

An experienced foster carer who fosters for an independent fostering agency and who is transferring to Staffordshire Fostering Service can be paid Level 4 fee from approval providing they are able to evidence their experience and skills. They will be given 12 months to produce their portfolio of evidence for the payment for skills scheme and to demonstrate they meet the performance criteria. Arrangements for the proposed fee level will be made with the carer prior to approval. When foster carers transfer to Staffordshire and continue to care for a child in placement there should be no detriment to the allowance and fee that the foster carers previously received for that child prior to the transfer. Any transfer will be in accordance with the protocol for transfer between agencies.

New applicants with relevant professional experience

For new applicants with relevant professional experience, entry at Level 3 can be agreed with the foster carer who will then have **6 months** to produce a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate they can meet the requirements of the payment for skills scheme.

18. Additional Payments for Children

Large sibling groups

Where a foster carer takes a sibling group of three, an additional payment of **£30.00** per child, per week will be made. For four children or more, £150 will be paid for the whole sibling group.

This payment will only be made providing the sibling group remain together in placement and are under 18 years old.

Additional payments for foster carers

For carers who have fostered for **more than two years** and have cared for a child/ren for **more than 250 days in the year**, a loyalty bonus of **£300** will be paid. The year will run from 1 April to 31 March, and the payment will be made the following July/August.

19. Adult's and Children's Financial Services - Payment Details

Timing of payments

The payment period runs from Sunday to Saturday, so a payment advice received on a Friday/Saturday will be in respect of the fortnight ending that Saturday.

Allowances will continue to be paid when a child has an unplanned absence from placement for three days or less. There will be a deduction of this allowance when the absence is pre - agreed.

Child benefit is not payable to foster carers who are in receipt of a weekly fostering allowance.

Payment of all fostering allowances ceases the day before the young person reaches the age of 18 years.

Fostering allowances are paid fortnightly, in arrears, by BACS (a credit direct into your bank account), which should arrive on a Friday or Saturday.

BACS payments are available for withdrawals to be made from Friday.

01785 854200

Email **fosteringpayments@staffordshire.gov.uk**

20. Change in Circumstances

The child's Social Worker must inform Adult's and Children's Financial Services (ACFS) immediately of any change in circumstances. The carer should also contact ACFS immediately should a placement end to try and avoid any overpayments.

Email fosteringpayments@staffordshire.gov.uk

Version Control	2026 - 2027 Edition, via Fostering Central Engagement Team
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The rates in this document update every 1st April.

This is a version of the internal Fostering Allowances document, supplied as a PDF to be included on the Staffordshire Foster Carer's Handbook Tri.X.

