

Adoption
& **Fostering**
in Halton

**FOSTER CARE
ALLOWANCES
GUIDE**

**APRIL 2009 –
MARCH 2010**

The following allowances apply from 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2010.

FOSTER CARE ALLOWANCES

The Foster Care Allowance has two levels of payment. A Foster Care Allowance and an Enhanced Foster Care Allowance. The Foster Care Allowance will be banded by age and will be paid to all carers whether they are approved for the general pool of Local Authority Foster Carers or approved as a carer for a specific child who is a relative or friend.

The Enhanced Allowance will be paid to carers who are managing young people with complex needs. It is acknowledged that caring for such young people is likely to lead to increased costs to the family. Eligibility for enhanced allowance will be assessed by the child's social worker and the carers supervisory social worker, and subject to approval and regular review.

Table 1 : Foster Care Allowances

	<u>Maintenance</u>	<u>Clothing</u>	<u>Pocket Money</u>	<u>Total Weekly Allowance</u>
0-4	£93.82	£27.51	£3.76	£125.09
5-10	£106.86	£28.50	£7.13	£142.49
11-15	£124.17	£44.35	£8.86	£177.38
16-17	£151.02	£47.47	£17.25	£215.74

Christmas Allowance – equivalent to 1 week allowance

Birthday Allowance – equivalent to 1 week allowance

Table 2 : Enhanced Foster Care Allowances

<u>Age Bands</u>	<u>Weekly Allowance</u>	<u>Christmas Allowance</u>	<u>Birthday Allowance</u>
0-4	£239.16	As above	As above
5-10	£256.37		
11-15	£290.87		
16-17	£331.87		

REDUCED FOSTER CARE ALLOWANCES

In recognition of what Foster Care Allowances are for, the payment of the weekly allowance will only be reduced if young people are out of the placement for more than 3 nights, or where the Care Plan clearly identifies the status of the placement as shared care.

A reduced Foster Care Allowance may also be paid in the following circumstances:-

When a child returns home as part of a rehabilitation plan and the care plan identifies the need to retain the existing placement for a set period of time. This must be stated clearly in the Care Plan and as a result half of the Foster Care Allowance will be paid for the specified period.

SHARED CARE

Where a placement is clearly identified as a shared-care arrangement, the Directorate will pay the Foster Care Allowance, or Enhanced Foster Care Allowance, whichever applies, for the days the young person is in placement. During the period when the young person is at home, or at the alternative placement, half the Foster Care or Enhanced Foster Care Allowance will be paid, whichever applies.

FOSTER CHILDREN OF WORKING AGE

If a young person is 16 or 17 years old and is in full-time education, carers will continue to receive the Foster Care or Enhanced Allowance, whichever applies.

If a young person is 16 or 17 years old and is not in full-time education, carers will continue to receive the Foster Care or Enhanced Foster Care Allowance, less £34.68 in respect of the young person in placement. The young person will be expected to contribute £34.68 a week towards their keep (if the child is only in receipt of benefits this may be reduced).

Foster Care Allowances are not payable once a young person reaches 18 years of age and is no longer looked after. Should the young person remain with the carer as a Care Leaver, the young person will be entitled to claim Income Support and Housing Benefit. This will be identified via the young person's Pathway Plan.

HOLIDAY ALLOWANCES

Holiday Allowances should be paid automatically to all carers who have children in placement over the summer holiday period. The Allowance should be paid automatically at the beginning of July. If the money is needed in advance, for deposits, this would need to be requested via the Social Worker.

We would expect carers to embark upon activities and day trips with young people during the holiday period, using the Allowance to cover such costs. Carers not going away during the summer, but planning a holiday later in the year would be expected to use the money paid automatically during the summer for such purposes.

Carers should not take children out of school for holidays during term time.

We continue to expect carers to take children away on holiday, rather than having to move children whilst a carer is away. Payment of Holiday Allowances as outlined will help to support this action.

Similarly, carers going on holiday in advance of the summer holiday period will be able to request the Allowance early. Holiday allowances should be paid as follows:-

Table 3

<u>Age</u>	<u>Holiday Allowance</u>
0-4	£250.18
5-10	£284.98
11-15	£354.76
16-17	£431.48

CLOTHING ALLOWANCES

A discretionary allowance up to the following amounts can be paid for each child when initially placed. This payment will only be made once, irrespective of the number of placements a child has.

<u>Age</u>	<u>Clothing Allowance</u>
0-4	£277.87
5-10	£370.57
11-15	£556.80
16-17	£556.80

School Uniform

The Directorate will meet the costs of new school uniform when a child starts school or moves to secondary school, up to an amount of £170.62

DISCRETIONARY PAYMENTS

Additional payments may be made for such things as special dietary needs, special clothing, severe enuresis or encopresis (i.e. 5 – 7 nights consider payment of £8.53 - £11.38). These payments will be made at the discretion of the Directorate and requests for such payments should be made via the Social Worker. Carers may seek advice through their Supervisory Social Worker if they wish to access these payments.

BABY SITTING

Foster carers may claim up to £3.15 per hour for baby sitting costs whilst attending approved meetings or training events.

Agreement to fund baby-sitting should be obtained by foster carers from their Supervisory Social Worker.

TELEPHONE CALLS

The basic Fostering Allowance includes an element for telephone calls. The Directorate will only consider reimbursing carers for excessive costs e.g. child maintaining contact with a relative living abroad.

TRAVEL/MILEAGE EXPENSES

The basic Fostering Allowance includes an element for travelling costs, which are part of the normal pattern of expenditure including looking after foster children. Travel costs, arising from the need to meet Children and Young People's Directorate requirements, beyond the normal pattern of family expenditure, can be claimed.

Examples of travelling costs which the foster care should be expected to absorb within the Fostering Allowance would include:

- Normal trips to see the child's General Practitioner if local to the foster carers.

- Transport to and from school where the school is less than three miles from the foster home.
- Taking and collecting the child from social activities.

Examples of travelling costs which the Children and Young People's Directorate would expect to meet would include:

- Travel to and from school where the school is more than three miles from the foster home and the child is not entitled to a school pass. In such cases it is the cost of travelling for distances over the three miles which will be met.
- Transport to and from contact meetings.
- Attendance at Case Conferences and Child Protection Meetings.
- The cost of travel to and from hospital where the child has a regular appointment with the hospital Consultant, or Specialist.

Travel costs will be met at the rate of **29.95p** per mile, or the cost of public transport and should be claimed monthly by the foster carer on the appropriate form. The form must be fully completed and signed by the foster carer and passed to the child's Social Worker. Any claims received later than 3 months from the date the travel took place will **NOT** be paid.

Where it is known that foster carers are expecting to be travelling long or frequent journeys, then the amount of travelling costs to be claimed should be negotiated by the Social Worker with the carer and agreement sought with the Social Work Team Manager. It may be that agreement is reached to cover the cost of petrol in such cases.

Day Care Mileage Claims for Children not Looked After

Mileage incurred as a result of undertaking day care, will be paid at the volunteer driver rate of **45.9p** per mile. This is because no Foster Care payments are received in relation to these children and so no element of that Allowance can contribute to the costs.

RIGHTS OF PASSAGE

When a child or young person is taking part in a formal ceremony to celebrate or symbolise their entry into full membership of their religion, up to £23.27 may be claimed for the purchase of gifts to commemorate this event.

HOSPITALITY

Where a foster carer, as part of a contact plan, rehabilitation programme, bridging plan or similar activity, provides food to siblings, parents, relations or new foster carers, a single payment of up to £11.37 per day may be claimed through the Social Worker.

FOSTER CARERS INVOLVED IN TRAINING

Carers who contribute to the training of new foster carers will receive a payment of £15.77 for each evening session attended or £40.96 per day for their contribution to this work.

ACCOMMODATION

If accommodation problems are preventing a foster carer from taking in a child or the needs of an existing foster child require extra space, help may be available towards the extra interest payments incurred in extending the house or moving to a larger house or other alterations. Please seek advice from the Local Authority about accommodation issues.

EQUIPMENT

The local authority will provide the furniture and other equipment required to enable a family to foster i.e. beds and bedding, cots, car seats, wardrobes etc. This is something that a carers link worker will speak to them about once a carer is approved.

SHORT BREAK SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

The home from home scheme is operational in Halton Borough Council.

Arrangements for short breaks and payments must be recorded within planning meeting minutes.

Payments for Carers are:-

Full day, ie more than 6 hours	£31.01
Part day, ie 6 hours of less	£15.26

For a period of more than 6 hours in a given day, the carer will receive a full day's payment. For a period of less than 6 hours in a day the carer will receive a part day's payment.

All home from home claims should be completed on the relevant form and submitted for payment on a regular basis. The scheme may attract some other discretionary payments, but before agreement is made, you should consult the home from home link worker.

DAY CARE PAYMENTS

Carers looking after a child or sibling group, for a full day (over 6 hours) will be paid £17.93 for each child. A half-day (up to 6 hours) will be paid at £8.96 for each child.

All day care claims should be completed on the relevant form and submitted for payment on a regular basis. Where Day Care is provided for a child who is subject to enhanced allowances, an additional £8.40 or £4.20 respectively will be paid.

APPENDIX FOR ENHANCED ALLOWANCES

Criteria for payment of the Enhanced Foster Care Allowance are outlined below. For children in the age range 0 – 12 years a **number** of the following circumstances or behaviours will apply. For children in the age range 12 – 16 years at least one of the following will apply. Enhanced allowances will be reviewed every 6 months or when a child moves placement, in some cases it may be appropriate to identify a specified period of time for the payment at the start of the payment. Payment of an enhanced allowance will cease following a period of two years except in exceptional circumstances i.e. child with severe disabilities.

1. Children who have experienced three or more placement breakdowns (breakdowns not moves) within a 12 month period.
2. Children permanently excluded from school.
3. Children with severe disabilities.
4. Children who are frequently missing from home.
5. Children displaying sexualised behaviour and needing a high level of supervision and attention.
6. Children displaying very challenging behaviour, ie drugs related, alcohol related, offence related, emotional difficulties etc.
7. Care leavers where this is a need to support carers with Independence Training, providing a cushion which allows them to take risks with young people who are learning to manage finances.
8. Children in sibling groups who are to be placed together for permanence. This could be a criteria which will stand alone (whatever the children's age). This payment will be for sibling groups of two or more, one allowance per sibling group would be paid in such circumstances and will be paid for a period not exceeding two years. The allowance would need to be applied for at the point of matching. Approved payments would begin following approval of the match by the Agency Decision Maker.