



**CHILDREN AND ENTERPRISE DIRECTORATE
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE**

FOSTER CARE ALLOWANCES GUIDE

**SEPTEMBER 2014 –
SEPTEMBER 2015**

The following allowances apply from September 2014 to 31st September 2015.

FOSTER CARE ALLOWANCES

The allowance scheme has two levels of payment. Level 1 is applicable to all approved carers. This includes recruited carers, family and friends carers and connected people. Level 2 is applicable to all those carers who are able to demonstrate the necessary skills and competencies as defined below.

LEVEL 1 FOSTER CARERS

All carers will be expected to meet the minimum fostering requirements, which includes:-

General:

- Providing a good standard of care to other people's children which promotes healthy, emotional, physical and sexual development as well as their health and educational achievement.
- Working closely with children's families, and others who are important to the child, in a non-judgemental way.
- Setting appropriate boundaries and managing children's behaviours, without the use of physical or inappropriate punishment.
- Knowledge of child development and an ability to listen and communicate with children appropriate to their age and understanding.

Providing a safe and caring environment:

- Ensuring that the children are cared for in a home where they are safe from harm or abuse.
- Helping children keep themselves safe from harm or abuse, and to know how to seek help if their safety is threatened.

Working as part of a team:

- Working with other professional people and contributing to the department's planning for the child/young person.
- Communicate effectively.
- Keep information confidential.

- Promote equality and diversity for all children.

Own development:

- Complete and update all core training.
- Complete and meet the competencies of the Training Support and Development Standards (TSDS) for foster carers.
- Have links within the community which provide support.
- Use training opportunities to improve skills and knowledge.
- Sustain positive relationships and maintain effective functioning through periods of challenge.

Practical:

- Provide transport to school, contact and leisure activities.
- Complete and renew all required statutory checks.
- Contribute to an annual review.
- Be available for support and supervisory visits from a supervising Social Worker.
- Compliance with the terms of the Foster Care Agreement
- Contribute to Carer Profile

Level 1 carers will receive a basic fostering allowance that reflects the full cost of caring for a child and is based on the Fostering Network recommended rate. Basic weekly allowances are age banded and subject to annual review. They **include** a payment of pocket money for each child. Additional payments can be claimed for birthdays, festivals and holidays.

LEVEL 2 FOSTER CARERS

Level 2 carers will be required to meet all the criteria for Level 1 and meet additional requirements which include:-

- A minimum of one year's experience of fostering and have had their first Review positively appraised and agreed by the agency decision-maker. (*see below)
- Successfully completed the following core training:
 - 1) At least one carer in each household must have completed training in TSDS Induction Standards and all core training (Safeguarding Children, Safer Care,

Recording, Managing Behaviour, The Children in Care Review Process, Life Story Work and Preparing for Independence)

2) Where two partners foster, one carer in the household must have completed all core training and the other must have completed Safeguarding Children and Safer Care and Recording training as a minimum.

The above training must be refreshed every three years. All carers in the household must also have undertaken any training which is identified as necessary, by the foster care service, at the point of approval or subsequently through supervision, personal development plan or annual review.

- Completed the Training Support and Development (TSDS) Standards for Foster Care – this applies to all approved carers within a household. (For couples, the completion of a single workbook for the household is permissible).
- Maintained a daily record for all children in placement.
- Contributed written reports for child’s review and attended child review meetings.
- Contributed to their own foster carer review process
- Attended school meetings for the child, including Personal Education Plan meetings (if applicable).
- Contribute to and have a current profile in place about their household to introduce themselves to children. The exception to this is if the carer already has long-term placements, in which case they must be committed to producing a book about their household if they become available to take new placements.

* If a carer is able to achieve all additional requirements in less than one year, consideration will be given to progressing them to Level 2.

Foster carers must also provide evidence of the following key skills:

- An ability to help children develop appropriate social behaviour, helping them to become more independent, and enabling them to cope with their emotions as appropriate to their age and ability.
- An ability to help children develop their play, language skills and general self-expression.
- An ability to help children learn the boundaries of acceptable behaviour without resorting to physical punishment, and within the requirement of current policy, handle children’s negative reactions and unacceptable behaviour, and encourage positive behaviour patterns.

- An ability to plan for and provide an appropriate routine for children which balances the child's needs, including those of play and learning, and gives goals which can be achieved in measuring the child's level of understanding and development.
- An ability to observe and respond appropriately to the possibility of child abuse and neglect.
- An ability to observe and assess children, clearly recording development.
- An ability to challenge appropriately, to ensure that foster care practice is anti-discriminatory and respects all children and their families.
- An ability to advocate on behalf of children.
- An ability to help children cope with loss and bereavement – this may be because of life threatening illness, separation through adoption, or loss of their family.
- An ability to work closely with other professionals, share information, exchange skills and knowledge and work in collaboration with them.

CHILDREN'S ALLOWANCES

Relevant expenditure should be evidenced through foster carer recording and it essential that children in foster care never perceive that they are being treated differently to foster carer's own children. Children should be assisted to budget appropriately and encouraged to save. Older children must be supported in choosing their own clothes and personal items as a means of developing skills in moving towards independence.

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. Similarly, carers going on holiday in advance of the summer holiday period will be able to request the Allowance early.

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.

Birthday Allowances

Birthday allowance is paid automatically to all carers

Festival Allowances

The allowance is paid automatically in November each year unless the child's faith is celebrated at another time of year. The supervising Social Worker will be responsible for requesting a payment on a different date.

SUMMARY OF ALLOWANCES

Age Band	Level 1	Level 2	Holiday	Birthday	Festival
0 -4 years	£160	£254	£264	£132	£132
5 – 15 years	£199	£295	£348	£158	£158
16 -17 years	£242	£337	£453	£211	£211

Pocket Money

Each child in foster care must receive a pocket money allowance which is included within the weekly basic fostering allowance at the following rates:-

0-4	£4
5-15	£9
16-17	£16

Where children are too young to receive or spend money, items may be purchased for them and a savings account should be opened in their name in order to bank any excess. All children should be encouraged to budget appropriately and save where possible.

Clothing Allowances

A discretionary allowance **up to** the following amounts can be paid for each child when initially placed. This is a maximum payment which will only be made once, irrespective of the number of placements a child has. The amount given will be based on each child's needs, must be agreed in advance of expenditure and all purchases supported by receipts.

0-4	£260
5-15	£360
16-17	£460

School Uniform

The costs of a new school uniform will be funded when a child starts school or moves to secondary school, up to an amount of £175.

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 on 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.

TRAVEL/MILEAGE EXPENSES

The basic Fostering Allowance is inclusive of travelling costs, which are part of the normal pattern of expenditure incurred in looking after foster children.

Where it is known that foster carers are expecting to be travelling long journeys in excess of 20 miles a day per child, additional travelling costs may be able to be claimed. This should be negotiated with the Supervising Social Worker in advance of any such journey. It may be that agreement is reached to cover the cost of petrol in such cases.

Where agreed, travel costs will be met at the rate of 30p per mile. This should be claimed immediately after the journey or, if a regular event, on a monthly basis by the foster carer on the appropriate form. The form must be fully completed and signed by the foster carer and passed to the Supervising Social Worker. **Any claims received later than 3 months from the date the travel took place will not be paid.**

SHARED CARE

Where a placement is clearly identified as a shared-care arrangement, the Directorate will pay the Foster Care Allowance, 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 allowance will be paid.

FOSTER CHILDREN IN EMPLOYMENT

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

Where a young person is in paid full time work or undertaking an apprenticeship, it may be appropriate to consider them contributing toward their care. This would be at a minimal level and would depend upon the level of pay, planned length of placement, proposals post 18. Any contribution would be deducted for the foster care allowance.

STAYING PUT

Foster Care Allowances are not payable once a young person reaches 18 years of age and is no longer in care. However, as part of a young person's Pathway Plan, it may be agreed that as a Care Leaver, they would benefit from remaining with their carer for all or some of the period up to their 21st birthday. Where is agreed as the plan by all involved, a payment up to a maximum of £200 per week will be made. This is subject to a financial assessment of the young person and the submission of all appropriate benefit applications.

MOBILE PHONE ALLOWANCE

The cost of maintaining a mobile phone for use in connection with all fostering related activity, will be reimbursed at the rate of £15 per month. This is subject to a signed agreement being in place.

HOSPITALITY

Where a foster carer, as part of a contact plan, rehabilitation programme, bridging place or similar activity, provides food to siblings, parents, relations or new foster carers, a single payment of **up to** £11.50 per day may be claimed. This is to be negotiated through the Supervising Social Worker.

FOSTER CARERS INVOLVED IN TRAINING

Carers who contribute to the training of new foster carers will receive a payment of £16 for each evening session or £40 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, care seats, wardrobes etc. This is something that a carer's Supervising Social Worker will speak to them about once a carer is approved.

SHORT BREAK SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

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

Payments for Carers are:-

Full day, i.e. more than 6 hours £33

Part day, i.e. 6 hours of less £17

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 short breaks 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 your supervising social worker or child's link worker.

SUPPORTING OTHER FOSTER CARE PLACEMENTS

If agreed by supervising social worker/child's social worker for exceptional situations, carers looking after a child or sibling group who are placed full time with another foster carer, for a full day (over 6 hours) will be paid £18 for each child. A half-day (up to 6 hours) will be paid at £9 for each child.

All supporting carer claims should be completed on the relevant form and submitted for payment on a regular basis.

INCOME TAX

It is the foster carers responsibility to ensure that they register with the HMRC and complete their tax returns. Further information can be found at www.hmrc.gov.uk.

REVIEW

The rate of allowance will be reviewed by the Council on an annual basis.