

## **Financial Support to Kirklees Foster Carers 2022 - 2024**

---

### **Introduction**

This document sets the rights and entitlements of financial support for our Kirklees Foster Carers and covers Maintenance Allowances, Skills Payments and other payments provided to our foster carers together with detailed guidance on their application.

Payments made to our foster carers are made up of two main elements; a *Maintenance Allowance* paid on a weekly basis depending on the age of the child placed, and a weekly *Skills Payment* depending on the level the carer.

(Allowance and Skills Payment amounts are detailed in the Appendix)

### **Authority to make payments.**

Payments to foster carers can only be made where they have been formally recommended for approval via a Fostering Panel and approval ratified by the Agency Decision Maker, or under Regulation 24 (Care Planning Regulations) where the approval is for Kinship Care.

### **Scope of this document**

This document provides detailed information in relation to:

- Maintenance Allowances and related guidance
- Additions to Maintenance Allowances and related guidance
- Skills Payments and related guidance
- Other financial and material support for foster carers
- Payments, procedures, decision making and related guidance.

## **1 Weekly Maintenance Allowance**

1.1 A weekly maintenance allowance is provided to cover the routine day to day care costs of looking after a child / young person in foster care. The amount of the weekly maintenance allowance is child age related and is calculated on a weekly basis, with sevenths being paid for part weeks. When a child becomes an age where the maintenance payment increases, this will take effect from the beginning of the week in which the child's birthday falls.

## **2 Allowance Amounts**

2.1 Weekly Allowance amounts are detailed in the appendix to this document.

### 3 Breakdown of the Weekly Maintenance Allowance:

3.1 Set out below is a breakdown by percentage of how the weekly maintenance is assessed to meet all the additional costs to our fostering households to maintain the child/ren to ensure that all maintenance costs are met by the authority. This is provided as guidance for utilising the weekly allowance. Foster Carers can exercise discretion and allocate proportions of the allowance depending on individual needs of children / young people placed:

Child Age	Food & Household	Clothing	Transport	Personal	Total
0-4yrs	70%	15%	8%	7%	100%
5-10yrs	68%	15%	7%	10%	100%
11-15yrs	65%	15%	6%	14%	100%
16-17yrs	65%	15%	4%	16%	100%

### 4 What the Weekly Maintenance Allowance covers:

4.1 The following list is provided for guidance and is not exhaustive:

- Food costs
- Household Costs: utilities e.g., additional gas / electric / washing & wear and tear: e.g., furniture / carpets / household items.
- School dinner / lunch money
- Clothing / Footwear (including replacing regular school uniform items)
- Organisational / Clubs clothing (e.g., Cubs / Scouts / Brownies)
- Nappies / baby items
- Personal Self Care items
- Toys, Books, Games etc.
- Education materials costs
- Leisure / hobbies / activities / entertainment
- School trips within the UK / activities
- Life Story Work materials / costs
- Transport costs to support and achieve placement commitments.
- Luggage costs associated with children's placement moves.

4.2 Foster carers providing Supported Board & Lodgings placements for young people aged 16 years and above receive the 16+ age related weekly allowance less the basic benefit rate for young people. For the current allowance rate, please see Appendix.

## 5 Guidance on specific items within the allowance:

<p><b>Pocket Money</b></p> <p><b>(Included Personal %)</b></p> <p><b>in</b></p> <p><b>Suggested Amounts</b></p> <p><b>Age:</b></p> <p>10yrs: £5.00          11yrs: £6.50          12yrs: £7.50          13yrs: £8.50          14yrs: £9.50          15yrs: £10.50          16yrs+ £12.00</p>	<p>Pocket Money weekly amounts suggested are for children and young people aged 10yrs and over for their general and personal requirements. The amount of pocket money to be given should be discussed at the outset of the placement with the child's social worker. It is acknowledged that the amount given needs to be equitable for all children within the household, including birth children.</p> <p>Foster carers with children under 10yrs should use the pocket money allowance to cover the costs of activities, etc.</p>
<p><b>Clothing and Footwear</b></p> <p><b>(Included in Clothing %)</b></p> <p><b>and</b></p>	<p>The clothing and footwear element should be used flexibly to purchase / replace items directly by foster carer/s as necessary for young children and can be provided to older children and young people as required. The weekly allowance should enable foster carers to maintain and increase the level of clothing over time.</p> <p>When a child is moving home it is expected that they will move with a reasonable amount of clothing that fits them, is in good condition and appropriate to seasonal conditions.</p>
<p><b>Savings</b></p> <p><b>£5.00 per week minimum for children 0-10</b></p> <p><b>£10.00 per week minimum for children 11-18</b></p>	<p>It is the responsibility of each Foster Carer to have savings for the children in their care in line with the amounts outlined. The Fostering Service plan to introduce a centralised saving scheme for all children and young people who are Looked After, this will ensure equity for all children and young people across a range of settings.</p> <p>A weekly amount of £5.00/ £10.00 will be added to their Junior ISA or Child Trust Fund. This amount will be deducted at source prior to the weekly maintenance allowance being paid.</p> <p>Short-term saving for items should be encouraged by foster carers to encourage children and young people to develop skills in managing finances.</p> <p>Young people (16+) who are receiving income from employment</p>

	<p>should be encouraged to save some of their clothing and pocket money allowance.</p> <p>The young person's social worker, with support from the foster carer's supervising social worker and the foster carer should assist a child/young person to open a bank account in their own name wherever this is possible.</p>
<p><b>Travel / Mileage</b>  <b>Mileage claims will be paid at @ £0.45p per mile. (NJC rate)</b></p> <p><b>Public transport</b></p> <p><b>School Plus Metro Card</b></p> <p><b>Taxis</b></p>	<p>It is an expectation that foster carers support the child / young person to travel to and from school, family time; health appointments; court attendance; supporting a child / young person's agreed specific leisure activity / hobby.</p> <p>Where carers incur mileage costs then these can be claimed on the appropriate monthly claim form detailing the journey reason and mileage incurred. Claim forms are forwarded to the foster carers supervising social worker.</p> <p>Claims must be submitted within 3 months of the journey, any claims over four months will not be paid.</p> <p>Carers should discuss any issues or queries regarding mileage claims / journey reason with their supervising social worker before submitting the claim form. Mileage claim forms are periodically audited.</p> <p>There is an expectation that young people aged 16-17 are provided with a weekly travel pass provided by the foster carer and that the use of public transport is encouraged for most journeys.</p> <p>All young people under the age of 18 who are in full-time education are entitled to a School Plus Metro Card. The Metro Card enables access to reduced price bus travel. For young people placed outside of the Kirklees area a bus pass relevant to his/her locality should be provided. In exceptional circumstances where an annual 'school only' pass is required, this should be funded by the area social work team.</p> <p>Taxi fares will only be reimbursed in exceptional circumstances.</p>
<p><b>Leisure / Activities</b></p>	<p>Foster Carers should support and enable children and young people to take part in regular appropriate agreed leisure activities and take part in educational day trips etc.</p> <p>A proportion of the Allowance should be used to pay for these and for the membership of a regular hobby or leisure club and/or contribute towards the cost of a social activity at least weekly.</p>

<p><b>Exceptional Leisure Learning / Activities costs not covered in the Allowance</b></p>	<p>Some children/young people may have an interest / hobby where the cost is significantly higher than provided for in the allowance and the foster carer may ask for a contribution to the lesson costs or rental / purchase of an instrument etc.</p> <p>Foster Carers can apply for extra funding towards exceptional costs to support leisure / learning / activities. This must be discussed with the foster carer's supervising social worker and child's social worker to establish agreement before applying via the child's social worker to the Children's Social Care Service Manager. Any decision to provide financial assistance should be time limited and reconsidered at each Child Looked After Review meeting.</p>
<p><b>School trips outside of UK</b></p>	<p>If during their time at Secondary School a young person would like to go on an optional non-educational trip abroad, partial funding will be provided for one trip during the school years 8-11, this will be a sum of up to £500.</p>
<p><b>Mobile phone allowance</b></p>	<p>Up to £100 can be requested towards the cost of a mobile phone for a young person by the foster carer, it will be agreed in conjunction with the child's social worker as to whether the young person is ready for the responsibility of having a phone. Should the phone be lost a maximum of £30 would be paid to cover the cost of a replacement. The costs for having a phone need to be covered on a pay as you go basis, phone contracts should not be taken out to cover the costs of phones or data usage.</p>

**6 Items paid in addition to the Weekly Maintenance Allowance:**

Item	Guidance
<p><b>School Clothing</b></p> <p>Primary School: £120</p> <p>Secondary School: £200</p>	<p>Ongoing school clothing / uniform needs are provided for within the weekly allowance. However, additional expenditure on school clothing may be required principally for purchase of particularly expensive school uniform requirements when a child/young person is starting at primary or secondary school, or if all the items of uniform need to be purchased at one time such as, when a child becomes Looked After.</p>
<p>(Up to maximum amounts)</p>	<p>Foster Carers should discuss with their supervising social worker who will then make an application to the Fostering Service Manager for decision / authorisation.</p>

<p><b>Initial Clothing Grant</b></p> <p>Age Range:</p> <p>0-12yrs: £200.00</p> <p>13yrs+ : £250.00</p> <p>(up to maximum amounts)</p>	<p>The Initial Clothing Grant is provided for essential items and will be paid where children/young people move to a new foster family and have insufficient clothing for their needs. (15 % of the weekly allowance is designated to meet ongoing clothing needs – see p3,'Clothing &amp; Footwear').</p> <p>The Initial Clothing Grant will be paid only upon the child/young person becoming Looked After for the first time.</p> <p>Foster Carers are responsible for maintaining a <i>Clothing Inventory Form</i> for purchased essential items of clothing via the Initial Clothing Grant and subsequent purchases; the child's social worker and the foster carer's supervising social worker should ensure that this is completed and reviewed every six months. When a child moves the inventory form should go with the child. The child's social worker should keep a copy of the form. Foster Carers are responsible for providing adequate clothing for the child/young person.</p>
<p><b>Clothing for special occasions</b></p> <p>Up to £150</p>	<p>There will be some occasions which require a child or young person to wear formal clothing, such as attending a school prom, a wedding, or a funeral. In these circumstances a grant will be paid to cover the cost of purchasing clothing/shoes suitable for the event.</p>
<p><b>Birthday Allowance</b></p> <p>1 Weeks Allowance</p>	<p>An allowance equal to one week's maintenance allowance appropriate to the age of the child will be automatically paid for a child's birthday in the fortnight prior to the child's birthday.</p> <p>The Birthday Allowance is provided to a foster carer to purchase birthday presents to provide a contribution towards the cost of celebrations.</p>
<p><b>Festival Allowance</b></p> <p>1 Weeks Allowance</p>	<p>A grant equal to one week's maintenance allowance appropriate to the age of the child will be paid in December automatically for all children living with a foster family.</p> <p>A request may be made to the child/young person's Supervising Social Worker, for any additional festival allowance e.g. Eid.</p> <p>Festival Allowances are paid to enable foster carers to purchase gifts for children/young people and to provide a contribution towards the cost of celebrations.</p>
<p><b>Annual Holiday Allowance</b></p> <p>2 Weeks Allowance</p>	<p>An allowance equivalent of two-weeks maintenance allowance (relevant to the age of the child) will normally be paid to the foster carer annually in the first week of July.</p> <p>Where a child or young person moves into a new foster home in July and August then consideration will be given to the payment of one week's allowance to the new foster carer to fund activities during the school holidays.</p>

<p><b>Holiday supplement allowance</b></p> <p><b>Spectacles/Contact Lenses/other health needs</b></p>	<p>If payment has been made to a foster carer and the child leaves their fostering family home in the period July- October resulting in the allowance not being spent, the costs will be recouped.</p> <p>The Annual Holiday Allowance is paid in addition to the weekly allowance and continuous service allowance and should be used to contribute towards expenses associated with taking a child or young person on holiday.</p> <p>If foster carers are undertaking overseas travel, adequate travel insurance must be obtained, and a copy of the policy provided for the child's social worker. Appropriate consent is required for all trips where children will be taken out of the country. The Local Authority will meet the costs of purchasing a passport for a child and any Visas which may be required for holiday travel.</p> <p>Where a foster carer wishes to ensure that a child/young person placed with them can accompany them on planned holidays but the cost to achieve this would be prohibitive due to the holiday needing to be taken outside of the school term, consideration will be given to paying a supplement of up to £300, evidence would need to be provided of the cost of the holiday. This would require the fostering Service Manager to authorise in consultation with the fostering team manager and supervising social worker.</p> <p>Consideration will be given by the child's social worker to meet any costs which are additional to NHS provision for glasses and contact lenses.</p> <p>Consideration will be given via the child's social worker to meet additional costs in connection with medical conditions i.e., enuresis if this is part of a specific and reviewed plan to address the issue.</p>
<p><b>Supporting Family Time including sibling contact</b></p>	<p>Where foster carers are directly supporting family time, they can claim up to £15 per child per session to cover reasonable expenses incurred such as funding a child/young person to take part in an activity or the purchase of a snack.</p> <p>Any additional costs related to a foster carer participating the activity can also be claimed.</p>
<p><b>Outreach support with activities</b></p> <p><b>Day care</b></p>	<p>The rate paid is intended to cover the purchase of a drink/snack for the child/young person. Where an activity is undertaken, foster carers can claim up to £15 to cover these costs. Additional costs for higher cost activities should be discussed with the supervising social worker prior to them being arranged.</p> <p>In the first instance foster carers should use their own support networks to provide this In the absence of this, and only in agreement with Kirklees Fostering Service, Other foster carers may be able to provide this-At a rate of</p>

£10 per hour per child for a maximum of 8 hours per day.

payable under the following circumstances.

- To provide childcare to enable foster carers attendance on courses to comply with the regulations and their approval.
- Support foster carers when they needed to attend appointments or meetings in relation to looked after children.
- Assist foster carers at times of crisis or provide additional placement support.
- Day care provided by short break carers caring for children during the day up to a maximum 8 hours.
- Provide care to one child whilst the other looked after child attends appointments.
- Newly approved carers are asked to identify one or two key supporters who will assist with the childcare of looked after children at times of training, emergency or support, for example, a foster carer for two children may need to liaise with a supporter to collect children from school when it clashes with a contact or appointment.
- Carers within two carer households should plan and organise for their partner/other foster carer to provide childcare for courses and support group attendance. (In some circumstances this may lead to both foster carers being on the same mandatory course; in which case named supporters/carers will provide cover.
- Single carers will be encouraged and supported to identify another carer as their main supportive network who will provide reciprocal support, for example, they will offer a similar number of hours/day support to enable carer's attendance.

This approach should minimise the level of disruption for the foster child who should be cared for by the main family supporter or designated 'buddy' carer.

Any childcare arrangements as part of the childcare plan involving respite or placement support will be covered outside of this guidance.

Childcare payments for social events and activities of carers will not be funded.

Carers should utilise the payments/allowances they receive to compensate the 'day care providers' for meals or activities that may occur.

PLEASE NOTE: Carers currently receiving their skills level payment who have no children placed with them may be asked to provide day care to other carers for which no extra payments would apply. It would be the responsibility of the main carer to provide any additional finance to cover for extra costs such as food or activities.



## **7 Foster Carer Skills Payments**

- 7.1 Foster Carer Skills Payments are distinct from maintenance weekly allowance payments. Skills Payments Fees provide financial reward to foster carers acknowledging the time, commitment and care provided.

## **8 Financial Enhancement**

- 8.1 The Fostering Service recognises that some children/young people have very complex needs which may change over time. Exceptionally, there may be circumstances that require financial enhancement to fees or allowances. Such as consideration of maintaining the home as a solo home when consideration will be given to paying for the vacant/void home. This would be subject to regular review every 4 weeks and approval by the Fostering Service Manager

## **9. Skills Payments and Payments for Same Day Placements**

- 9.1 On occasion children move to foster families at short notice, i.e. on the same day Where Foster Carers agree to provide a home for a child /young person moving in at short notice, i.e., commencing on the same day for children aged 13+ years carers will receive an extra £40 a day (up to £280 week), for the first 4 weeks. In agreeing to take the child the carer is committing to taking the home for a minimum of four weeks. Where it is known at the outset that the home will not extend beyond 14 days then the same day home fee will not be triggered or paid.
- 9.2 Where it is agreed that the child/young person will continue to live with the foster carer for a further four weeks then in weeks 4- 6 the additional payment will continue to be paid but will reduce by 50% to £20 a day (up to a £140 a week) and in weeks 7 – 8 the additional payment will reduce to £10 a day (up to £70 a week)
- 9.3 The additional weeks (5-8) will only be paid when the home runs continuously with no break as the intention is to reduce the number of homes moves which young people experience.
- 9.4 Payment arrangements are based on a seven-day week. At the end of the eight weeks the payments will return to existing costs.

## **10 Retainer fees**

### **For Foster carers approved prior to 01 June 2023:**

- 10.1 Payments as outlined in your Foster Carer agreement will continue to apply. Payments will continue unless carers decline more than three successive proposed matches. Please refer to the Unreasonable Refusal Policy at Point 11 below.

### **For Foster Carers approved after 01 June 2023:**

**In any year we will pay a foster carer households one skill level fee and continuous service allowance for 12 weeks, where there is no child in place- as per below:**

- 10.2 In the gap between providing a home for a child, foster carers will be paid one full fee (Skills Payment and Continuous Service Allowance) per household per week for a maximum of 12 weeks (except for unpaid leave and sickness arrangements) in any one financial year. In the gap between providing a home for a child Looked After, there will be the discretion to pay foster carers one full fee per household per week for a maximum of 12 weeks in any one financial year. This would be considered when in discussion with the supervising social worker it is considered that it would be beneficial for the fostering household to take a planned break.
- 10.3 It is recognised that foster carers may wish to take a break, the duration of this will be agreed with their supervising social worker, but it is expected that this would not be longer than 3 weeks, with no more than two breaks in a year.
- 10.4 After the planned break, proposed homes will be discussed. It is anticipated that carers will not decline more than three successive proposed matches, the aim being to ensure that we can maximise the fostering homes which are always actively available for our Children Looked After. During these breaks the relevant retainer would be paid, any weeks taken would be deducted from the overall figure of 12 weeks.
- 10.5 A retainer for newly approved carers can be paid during the introductory period following matching. In exceptional circumstances and subject to Service Manager for Fostering approval, the retainer can be paid from the point of approval until the point the first child joins the fostering household.

## **11 Unreasonable Refusal Policy**

- 11.1 It is anticipated, when carers do not have a Looked After young person or child living with them, that carers will not decline more than three successive proposed matches. An unreasonable refusal will be determined in line with the Fostering Service. Foster Carers will be advised in writing if a refusal has been determined as an unreasonable refusal.
- 11.2 If more than three proposed matches are declined, then all payments will cease. Payments will be reinstated when a match is made.
- 11.3 Where there is a dispute regarding what would constitute "unreasonable refusal" of a placement by a Foster Carer, the Supervising Social Worker (SSW) will record and discuss with the Fostering Team Manager. The Fostering Team Manager will then provide information for arbitration and decision to be made by the Service Manager (Fostering). If this cannot be resolved by the SM, it will be referred to the relevant Head of Service / Assistant Head of Service for decision. In exceptional circumstances, the matter may be referred by the SM (Fostering) to a Fostering Panel Chair for arbitration.

## **12 Payments when Allegations against Foster Carers are under investigation**

- 12.1 Carers are entitled to receive continuing payments when an allegation has been made. This applies when carers may be subject to the Allegations Management process/ Post Allegation Review process/ Foster Panel. Payment will be paid at the Skills Payment and Continuous Service Allowance rate being received by the foster carer at the time the child left the home.
- 12.2 All payments may be suspended immediately by the Service Manager or Head of Service for Fostering where there is clear supported evidence of and / or carer admission of serious malpractice and/or significant harm to a child/young person.
- 12.3 All payments during the investigation of allegations are subject to full co-operation of the foster carer in the investigation. Failure to co-operate may result in the withdrawal of all payments. In such circumstances, the Head of Service should be asked to make the decision, based on information provided by the Fostering Team and Service Manager.
- 12.4 If Foster Panel recommend that a Foster Carer is de-registered following an Allegations Management process, or following practice concerns then payments will cease on the date the Agency Decision Maker ratifies the decision. If a Foster Carer successfully overturns a decision through the Independent Review Mechanism, then payments will be reinstated and backdated.

### **13 Payments when Foster Carers are sick**

- 13.1 If a Foster Carer is unable to carry out their role and provide placements due to ill health, then the following will apply:
- 13.2 Carers are entitled to receive continuing payments on the production of a fit note from their GP.
- 13.3 Payment will be paid at the Skills Payment and Continuous Service Allowance rate being received by the foster carer at the time.
- 13.4 Payments will be made for a maximum of 6 months.

### **14 Annual leave and agreed planned respite payments**

- 14.1 Paid leave entitlement (also sometimes referred to as 'Holiday') is available for foster carers to take in any one financial year period (April – March) outside their fostering home commitments. If Carers holiday without their foster children they will receive all fee payments they are in receipt of excluding maintenance.
- 14.2 If a Foster Carer has not had a break from fostering in a year, they will be paid 28 days one full fee payment in lieu of leave. Any leave not taken in a financial year will be paid to a foster carer pro rata.
- 14.3 Annual leave cannot be carried over.
- 14.4 Carers wishing to take a holiday or short break which will not involve the child/ren or young person who is placed with them can continue to use their delegated authority

carers or request that alternative carers are identified to provide care during the period of the planned holiday/break. Four weeks' notice of the intended holiday should be given by the foster carer to their supervising social worker.

## **15 Payments to Respite/Short Breaks Carers**

- 15.1 Some carers are approved for or wish to provide short breaks or respite care only. Carers who fall in this category will be paid:
- 15.2 the relevant Fees and allowances on a pro-rata basis for the period of time the child/ren are in their care.
- 15.3 the relevant fee level when in attendance at training.

## **16 Payments Procedures**

- 16.1 Fees and allowances are paid to foster carers on a fortnightly basis.
- 16.2 All payments are made to foster carers via the direct bank credit system.
- 16.3 An Annual Financial Statement is sent to foster carers by Fostering Finance team at the start of each financial year. The statement provides carers with details of all allowance and fee payments made to them during the previous financial year.

## **17 Payment arrangements for Home Introductions**

- 17.1 Where the child is visiting a foster home for introductions and has a primary home elsewhere, the new carer will be paid 1/7th of their appropriate fee level, and 1/7th of the maintenance allowance for each day that the child is in home with them.
- 17.2 Where home introductions extend beyond 14 days, discussions should take place between the Fostering Team Manager and Social Work Team Manager with a view to suggesting a structure of payment. Any exceptional financial arrangement must be approved by the Fostering Service Manager.
- 17.3 Where foster carers are supporting children to move to an adoption home and overnight accommodation is required away from their home area, this will be booked and paid for by the Local Authority. Carers can claim an allowance for meals in line with the rates agreed by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services. Mileage will be claimed to cover all journeys required to support the introductions.

## **18 Payments if Children and Young People are absent from home**

- 18.1 In situations where a child or young person is absent from their foster home the Allowance and Fee will only generally be paid for up to 7 days.
- 18.2 Any decision to continue allowances and fee payments will be taken following an assessment of need and will consider whether the child/young person is still being supported by their foster carer/s. For example, whether a child or young person is in

hospital and carer/s are visiting daily and providing ongoing practical, emotional, and financial support.

18.3 If a child is away at a residential school, the carer will receive their relevant Skills payment fee, Continuous Service allowance, plus 1/7th of the maintenance payment for each night that the child stays in their foster home.

## **19 Benefit Payments / Carers for Children with Disabilities**

### **19.1 Disability Living Allowance (DLA)**

19.2 All children and young people with a disability will in principle, meet the eligibility criteria for middle or higher rate Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

19.3 At the point of becoming Looked After, the child Looked After review and placement and care planning meeting should clarify matters relating to the child's DLA claim. If the DLA is being paid to a parent, the claim should be transferred to the foster carer who will become a 'Benefit Appointee'.

19.4 At the initial placement planning meeting the foster carer's Supervising Social Worker will assist the foster carer to make a claim for Disability Living Allowance, if not previously completed. The DLA is intended to meet the additional cost of caring for a child/young person with disabilities.

19.5 DLA is paid in addition to the weekly maintenance allowance and should be used to meet the child/young person's additional needs. Foster carers should set up a bank account in their name for the specific purpose of managing the child's DLA and any other financial support and to provide an audit trail of income and expenditure.

19.6 DLA which is not spent on the needs of the child should be saved in the bank account for the child or a savings account (e.g., Junior ISA). Foster Carers should keep a record of large expenditure items related to the child's DLA.

## **20 Carer's Allowance**

20.1 If the child/young person receives middle or high-rate DLA the carer may be eligible to claim Carer's Allowance from Welfare Benefits. There is only one claim paid, regardless of how many eligible people they care for and only one person can claim even if more than one person is providing care. From the age of 16 yrs., eligible young people can claim benefits and where appropriate should be assisted and encouraged to do so. When these benefits are claimed, the Personal Allowance element will be deducted.

## **21 Foster Carer Training Expenses**

21.1 Transport costs to approved carer training and professional development activities can be reimbursed via a mileage claim form (see Travel / Mileage) or via production of bus / train ticket. Parking costs can also be reimbursed.

- 21.2 Travel expenses should be submitted by a foster carer to their Supervising Social Worker and must be supported by relevant car mileage journey record / travel tickets and attendance certificate.
- 21.3 Subject to prior approval via their supervising social worker and a fostering Team Manager, foster carers can be reimbursed for milage and car parking incurred from attending other training courses and professional development activities approved by the Fostering Service.

## **22 Holiday Vehicle Hire**

- 22.1 Foster carers can apply via their supervising social worker to hire a large /adapted vehicle for the duration of planned holiday's. Vehicle hire will only be agreed if the foster family (to include members of the fostering household only – not other friends and relatives) and foster children cannot travel safely in a family car and /or if an adapted vehicle is required.
- 22.2 The vehicle hire budget is strictly limited and is monitored. It is essential that requests are booked as far in advance as possible, particularly if a request is for a multi-person vehicle (MPV), or a minibus.
- 22.3 The latter will require the foster carer to take a minibus test and to achieve this requires considerable advance booking. If taking the hired vehicle abroad, any additional insurance costs incurred are payable by the carer.

## **23 Equipment and Furniture provision**

- 23.1 Payments are made for equipment and furniture is to support newly approved foster carers to meet the needs of children who come to live with them. The identification of any new furniture /required equipment will be undertaken during the child's placement planning meeting, and approval will need to be agreed with the foster carers supervising social worker.
- 23.2 Essential furniture and equipment items provided include beds / bunk beds / mattress / mattress protectors/ bedding / cot / chest of drawers / wardrobe / car seat / baby equipment / safety gates etc). Maximum amounts are set for items, see appendix)
- 23.3 Sometimes an existing foster carer will need additional essential equipment to enable them to meet a child's needs, e.g., a car seat, in these instances these will need to be discussed with the foster carers supervising social worker.
- 23.4 The need for additional or replacement furniture /equipment will be assessed during foster carer supervisory visits and if any replacement is required, agreement will need to be sought.
- 23.5 Receipts for the purchase of furniture, furnishing /equipment must be retained by a foster carer and given to their supervising social worker for approval by the Fostering Team Manager and processing by the Fostering Finance team.

23.6 All equipment should be regarded as on loan. For more details regarding essential equipment (including full baby equipment list), authorisation and purchasing, foster carers should contact their supervising social worker.

23.7 Children with Disabilities carers may require additional specialist equipment. Specialist equipment for disabled children will normally be provided following an Occupational Therapist (OT) assessment/or agreement at Resource Panel.

23.8 Following the provision of furniture /equipment, foster carers are responsible for maintaining the overall condition and furnishing of their home to an acceptable standard. This includes the security and maintenance of the garden or outside area.

23.9 It is an expectation that foster carers take out household insurance.

## **24 Property Adaptations and damage to Foster Carer homes.**

24.1 Damage to foster carers homes- all foster carers should have insurance for their homes and contents. A claim can be made via the Council's insurance for property damage only if their own insurers have confirmed that they will not meet the claim.

24.2 Requests for repairs due to malicious damage if not covered by insurance caused by a child or young person to a foster carer's home should be made via the Supervising Social Worker.

24.3 Any out-of-pocket costs associated with damage caused by a child placed by the Local Authority can be via the Supervising Social Worker. Carers are strongly advised that to ensure that funding has been agreed before incurring any expense.

24.4 The funding of any property adaptations and installations for foster carer households will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

24.5 Requests for adaptations to rented property should first be made through the landlord / existing protocol for Kirklees Council housing. If it is helpful, the Fostering Service Manager may wish to support the application following a joint discussion with the child's social worker and the foster carer's supervising social worker.

24.6 Where significant amounts of funding are requested, it is good practice for the child's social worker and the carer's supervising social worker to show evidence of discussion with their respective managers, and to make a joint written submission to the Fostering Service Manager which would then be presented to Finance Panel for consideration.

24.7 Children with Disabilities carer's homes may need adaptations to meet the individual needs of disabled children. The service will support foster carers to access Disabled Facility Grants and other sources of funding to meet the needs of the child following an Occupational Therapist assessment.

## **25 Key Documents for Children Looked After**

25.1 The child's social team will pay for a passport and birth certificate for all children and young people Looked After. These items are essential and assist with opening bank/savings accounts and provide identification verification, including when young people move to independence.

## **26 Foster Carer Continuous Service Awards**

26.1 A continuous service award of £10.14 per week per year of service after foster carers first year will be paid to all carers. This award is payable for a maximum of 15 years. i.e., after fostering for 15 years carers will receive an additional payment of £152.10 per week.

## **27 Overpayment of Allowances and Fees**

27.1 The Fostering Service will make every effort to ensure overpayments of fees or allowances do not occur.

27.2 Foster carers have an individual responsibility to check all payment information received and to contact their supervising social worker / fostering finance team immediately if an overpayment does occur. Where significant overpayments are identified these will be notified by the Fostering Finance team to the Fostering Service Manager. In the event of an overpayment, the Fostering Service will seek to recover the full amount.

27.3 Prompt arrangements for repayment should be formally agreed as soon as possible. (Agreement to overpayment arrangements is included in the signed Foster Carer Agreement document following carer approval).

27.4 Recovery of overpayments will proceed as per below:

27.5 If the foster carer continues to receive a regular payment:

27.6 If there has been a small overpayment (a foster carer being paid for a child who left less than a week earlier than they have received payment for) this overpayment will be calculated and deducted from the next payment. A note will be added to the carer's remittance detailing this.

27.7 If the overpayment is larger, the payments will be deducted over a six-week period (3 payments). A note will be added to the carer's remittance detailing the amount of the overpayment and the pay periods this will be taken back over.

27.8 In situations where a foster carer is not continuing to receive a regular payment, negotiated arrangements will be made, for example, paying back the overpayment in full by cheque or BACS transfer.

27.9 We will seek to recover monies owed to the Local Authority from deregistered carers under the Local Authority debt recovery policy.



## 28 Implementing this document

28.1 This document, though detailed, may not cover all possible situations.

28.2 Exceptional decisions should always be supported with the written authority of the Head of Service, subject to review on an agreed date and recorded as an exceptional decision for the purposes of monitoring the effective application of this document.

## 29 Monitoring Decision Making

29.1 This guidance is part of a range of measures designed to support consistency, coherence and transparency in decision making.

29.2 From time to time a retrospective moderation exercise may take place where consistency in decision making across individual officers and teams will be considered as part of a key aim to ensure consistency and compliance with funding structures and processes.

## 30 Importance of updating information held by Fostering Payments Team

30.1 Carers will continue to be paid according to the most recent instruction by a member of staff until notified that circumstances have changed.

30.2 NB: It is essential when predictable patterns of care (e.g., Respite) change, or when a child moves home, or any other relevant change takes place that Fostering Finance Team are notified immediately.

## 31 Income Tax, Welfare Benefits

31.1 Foster carers are reminded that Skills payments and allowance payments can impact on their Income Tax and Welfare Benefits (where relevant). Foster Carers should familiarise themselves with HMRC guidance on tax and relevant guidance on Welfare benefits or seek individual advice from HMRC, Welfare Benefits service or from The Fostering Network: [The Fostering Network is the UK's leading fostering charity | The Fostering Network](#)

## APPENDIX

### 1. Weekly Allowances amounts

Child Age:

Amount:

0-4 yrs	£155.00
5-10 yrs	£175.56
11-15 yrs	£219.80

16yrs+	£267.38
--------	---------

**2. Weekly Allowances amounts – other provision:**

Supported Board & Lodgings providers: £118.29

**3. Foster Carers (including Support Care Scheme & Children with Disabilities Short Breaks)**

**Hourly Payment rates for additional tasks:**

**Rate 1: £10 per child per hour** (undertaken in carers own home); 'e.g. child care / childminding' / child sitting service / agreed oversight for children / young people

**Rate 2: £10 per child per hour** (tasks undertaken outside carers home): e.g. sessional outreach / agreed individual support for carers / overseeing 'home alone'

**4. Skills Payments fee structure and weekly fee amounts:**

Skills payment Levels	1 <sup>st</sup> Home	2 <sup>nd</sup> and subsequent Home
1	£106.47	£63.88 per child
2	£133.09	£63.88 per child
3	£186.32	£63.88 per child
4	£239.56	£63.88 per child

**5. Equipment Prices**

Bed (no mattress) -£200

Mattress -£100

Wardrobe £200

Chest of drawers- £120

Cot/cot bed (with mattress) - £150

Cot mattress (after each placement) - £50

Steriliser- £50

Monitor- £50

Safety gates - £35

Moses' basket- £60

Car seat- £250

Pushchair/pram- £250

Fireguard - £40

Highchair- £70

Bottles - £30