

2023-2024

Fostering Fees & Allowances



Havering
LONDON BOROUGH

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1. Introduction

1.1 The nature of fostering children has changed significantly in recent years. As our services, commitment and support to enable families to care for their own children where possible has increased, foster carers are now being asked to care for children with more challenging behaviours.

1.2 Havering has high ambitions and aspirations for our looked after children. We want them to be able to reach their full potential and to achieve their goals and we recognise that skilled foster carers will help them to achieve this.

1.3 We highly value our foster carers and the service they offer to looked after children. We wish to reward our foster carers for their skills and commitment to caring for our looked after children. We have developed levels which recognise the value of a skilled and experienced workforce in improving the outcomes for our looked after children.

1.4 The overall purpose of the levels are to:

- a) Ensure that the payment outline as fair and equitable as possible.
- b) Ensure that child-care element of the payment is fully understood.
- c) Ensure that foster carers are able to meet the needs of the children placed in their care.
- d) Ensure that foster carers have adequate reward in relation to their levels of skills and experience.
- e) Clarify the difference between the allowance element paid to carers to enable them to provide for the child in their care and the reward element which recognises and rewards the skills and experience of our foster carers.

1.5 The levels allocate part of the payment as an allowance, which will be adequate to meet the needs of a child in placement and part as a 'reward fee' for the foster carer.

1.6 Family and Friends foster carers (sometimes referred to as Kinship carers or Connected persons) are valued equally to unrelated carers and as such are eligible for payments on the same terms. Family and Friends foster carers are treated equally throughout this payment outline. This is in line with London Borough of Havering's policy and legal guidance and the Fostering National Minimum Standards.

1.7 The payments outline is intended to acknowledge that fostering is a unique situation where looked after children are living as part of a family. Fostering does not have the same attributes as other working situations.

- a) The Fostering Payment scheme is split into 2 parts:
- b) The allowance paid to cover the costs of the child or young person placed
- c) The reward element or fee for the foster carer.

1.8 In addition to the two main parts there may additional payments made in certain circumstances when agreed by the Head of Service.

1.9 The level of allowance is based on the recommended rates from the Fostering Network for carers in London.

2.Allowances

General

2.1 All looked after children are likely to have extra needs over and above children who continue to live with their birth parents. Therefore in calculating this rate, Fostering Network have considered the basic costs for raising a child as provided by the Government and added a further enhancement in recognition of the extra needs of any looked after child and costs incurred as a result of this.

2.2 The fostering allowance element for any full time placement should therefore pay for most of the expenses associated with caring for the child or young person.

2.3 This includes:

- Food
- Clothing
- Luggage
- Pocket money
- Additional savings for child/young person
- Fares and local transport costs (up to 60 miles per week), including transport to and from school and contact arrangements and any day trips, visits, holidays and leisure activities.
- Costs associated with attending school
- Heating and other utilities
- Toiletries including hair products
- Hair cuts
- Extra laundry requirements
- UK telephone calls to mobiles and landlines
- Entertainment and activities including attending clubs
- Attendance at mainstream parent and toddler groups, nurseries and holiday play schemes
- Replacement of toys and equipment due to wear and tear
- Costs associated with the increase of appointments both in and out of the foster home
- Household insurance
- Other normal day to day expenses involved in caring for any child.

2.4 The level of allowance is different depending on the child's age. There are three age groups:

- 0-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-17 years.

2.5 The allowance paid to carers is to enable them to offer good quality care to a child or young person. It is not intended that the whole amount of the allowance be paid to any child or young person in the care of a foster carer.

2.Allowances

Parent and Child Placements

2.6 Parent and child placements offer foster care placements a home to a baby or young child together with its parent.

2.7 Input from a foster carer can provide the help a young parent needs with reassurance, guidance, and support during a period of considerable change. The foster carer helps the young parent to develop their own parenting skills. The foster carer also ensures the child is in a safe, secure and nurturing environment, taking part in assessments and encouraging young parents without taking over their parental responsibilities.

2.8 Where foster carers are approved for parent and baby placements and the parent is over 18 years, these will be paid at the full payment for parent (16/17 age allowance and carer's fee) and half the payment for the child (age related allowance and carer's fee), in the expectation that the child's parent is providing the majority of the day to day care.

2.9 If the parent is under 18 the full allowance and fee will be paid to the carer for both the parent and the child. There is an expectation that a proportion of the child's allowance will be given to the parent to allow him or her to care for the child. This should be agreed at the placement planning meeting.

2.10 The Placement Plan should clearly outline the expectations of the foster carer and parent in terms of purchasing of food, clothing, caring regime etc. It is generally expected that the parent will purchase food, clothing and other items as necessary for the child out of any benefit entitlements.

Dates of Payment

2.11 All of the allowances are paid on a fortnightly basis one week in arrears and one week in advance (with the exception of August and December which are four weekly).

2.12 Because of the nature of fostering, there will be times when carers have been overpaid due to a child moving mid payment cycle. In this instance foster carers will be expected to repay the Council within 30 days. Likewise if there are situations where a carer has been underpaid, payment of the shortfall will be arranged directly.

2.13 Where an overpayment has been made, carers can opt to have any repayment deducted from any other continuing payments for other children in placement.

However if there is no other child in placement, the carer will be expected to reimburse the Council in a timely fashion either by agreeing with their supervising social worker a repayment schedule or full repayment within 30 days.

2.Allowances

Pocket Money

2.14 All fostered children and young people aged 5 and above should be given pocket money. This enables them to begin to understand the value of money and to understand what they can afford to buy from an early age.

2.15 Withholding pocket money should not be used as a sanction against a child or young person unless this has been agreed with the child's social worker as payment for damage caused by the young person in placement.

2.16 If there are concerns about how any young person is spending their money (e.g. use of drugs or alcohol or persistent and prolonged absence) this should be discussed with the child's social worker and it may be appropriate to offer to spend the money with the child or to break it up into smaller daily amounts. It may even be appropriate to reduce the weekly amount in these circumstances. This money can be put aside for later or be added to the young person's savings. Where young people have been missing it may be appropriate to delay payment.

2.17 The recommended age range weekly pocket money allowances are as follows:

- 5-10 years £5.00
- 11-16 years £10.00
- 16+ £20.00

(additional amount for young person to purchase all non-essential clothing).

2.18 Foster carers should not take out a mobile phone contract in respect of any looked after child in their care. There is no requirement that all looked after children should have a mobile phone. However many of their peer group are likely to have one (depending on their age) so this needs to be considered. Provision of a mobile phone is at the discretion of the foster carer in consultation with the social worker and child's parents. Carers may provide a looked after child with a "pay as you go" mobile package if they wish- this may be as part of a birthday or Christmas/Religious festival gift.

2.19 Top up payments for mobile phones should be agreed by the foster carer with the young person and the placing social worker at the placement planning meeting and be reviewed on a regular basis. Any such payments should be in addition to the pocket money allowance set in 2.17.

Savings

2.20 Savings are deducted at source of payment and placed in a child ISA for each child looked after until they are 18 years of age.

2.21 There will be situations where a young person will receive a significant amount of money under the arrangements for savings. Money placed in a savings account for a child or young person will be transferred to the young person at the age of 18. It is expected that the foster carer and social worker will have undertaken work with the young person prior to their 18th birthday so that they understand the most appropriate way of managing this money.

2.Allowances

Supplementary Support Care (SSC)

2.22 Ideally every child should have the opportunity to live as part of the family without disruption to their care giving environment. However, in exceptional circumstances, a break may be part of the care plan or agreed as part of a stability meeting around the needs of the young person.

2.23 Frequency and any payments are to be agreed by Head of Service/Fostering Team Manager prior to arrangements commencing in conjunction with the Social Worker for the young person.

2.24 Foster carers can provide unpaid support for another carer in their network with the agreement of the supervising social worker and the social workers involved, and also inform the Fostering Service as the whereabouts of any young person in our care must be recorded.

2.25 A request for a break must be completed for all situations not identified at placement planning meeting or stability meeting.

Sudden incapacity to care for children - Foster Carer illness or bereavement

2.26 There are occasions where a foster carer is unable to continue to care for a child placed with her/him due to their own or a significant family member's illness or a family bereavement. In this case the allowance element of the payment will cease to be payable to the foster carer from the date the child/young person moves. The carers fee will be payable for a period of up to 2 weeks. In exceptional circumstances this can be extended at the discretion of the Head of Service for the Fostering service.

Allegations

2.27 This section deals with payments when an allegation about a foster carer is made. This is not the policy on allegations. For more information see the Allegations and Complaints section in the Foster Carers Handbook and the Allegations Against Foster Carers section of the Havering Child Care Procedure Manual.

2.28 Where an allegation has been made against a foster carer a decision can be reached that the child should be removed for the period of the investigation. The allowance and all other child related payments including holidays and birthday allowances for the child removed will cease to be payable to the foster carer from the date the child moves. The foster carer will continue to receive the fee element for that child for the period of that investigation for up to six months, even if there is another child remaining in placement.

2.29 Where a child has been removed after an allegation and an investigation is continuing, the foster carer will receive their full fostering payment for two weeks from the date the child was removed. This will be followed by the payment of the appropriate fee level until the date of the final strategy meeting or for six months, whichever is earlier.

2.30 At the direction of the Head of Service, the fee level can continue and be reviewed monthly.

2.Allowances

2.31 Where a foster carer is suspended, which is likely to be the case if, for example, they are charged with a serious offence either against a child in their care or that would prohibit them from fostering; only the fee element will continue to be paid for the period of any such investigation up to six months. The allowance for the child removed and all other child related payments including holidays and birthday allowances will cease to be payable to the foster carer from the date the child moves.

2.32 If any investigation shows clear evidence that the carer has harmed a child in their care such that they are unlikely to remain approved as a foster carer, all payments may be suspended immediately at the discretion of the Head of Service for the Fostering service. Such decisions will be made on a case by case basis. In such instances paragraphs 2.31 and 2.32 above shall not apply. In the event that when the foster carer's approval is reviewed and they are not removed as a foster carer, then payments that would otherwise have been made under paragraphs 2.31 or 2.32 above will be reinstated and backdated. This is likely to be a rare and extreme instance – in most cases such decisions will need to wait for the outcome of the investigation.

2.33 The outcome of an investigation may lead to recommendations for additional training or other practice issues. It is possible that one of the outcomes of an investigation might be to reconsider the appropriate level of fee for the carer.

2.34 Should an investigation be required outside of CYPS and take longer than six months, the situation will be reviewed and returned to Fostering panel.

Preparation for Independence

2.35 It is important that young people are given as much experience as possible in managing finances before moving to independence.

2.36 It is equally important to remember that young people will need to manage on a limited income when they live independently. A balance needs to be struck between spending adequately as for any young person in care and not allowing them to build up unrealistic expectations. Children of all ages should be encouraged to develop age appropriate skills in managing money and general saving and budgeting skills.

2.37 If a young person wishes to remain with their foster carers after they reach 18, this is appropriate to their care needs and the foster carers are willing to continue to offer accommodation consideration needs to be given to converting the placement to staying put. This will need to be discussed with the young person's social worker and a request made at least 6 months before the young person's 18th birthday.

Please see the Staying Put Policy.

3.Fees

3.1 Fees are paid to foster carers depending on their level of skills and experience and the needs of the young person.

3.2 Fees are income for the carer/s and are paid as recognition of skills and experience for the foster carer.

3.3 Fees are payable to one foster carer only in any household but both partners will be required to meet the eligibility criteria to increase or maintain their fee level approval.

3.4 There are five levels of fee. Progression through the levels will be agreed between the foster carer and the local authority on a full set of criteria.

3.5 Training to enable foster carers to progress through the levels will be supported with flexible times where possible and will include opportunities for online learning. Foster carers can use their identified back up supporters to cover childcare for training sessions following discussion with SSW.

3.6 As well as rewarding foster carers, the levels of fees are designed to give incentive to foster carers to increase their level of skills and experience and to improve attendance at training courses provided by the Fostering service

3.7 Support will be given where necessary to any carers who may be disadvantaged in progressing through the fee levels as a result of English being a second language or a level of disability or special need.

3.8 There is no defined limit on the numbers of carers at any level. Any foster carer can progress through the levels as long as the required criteria are met.

Fee Level 1

3.9 To be eligible for payment at Fee Level 1 Foster carers must:

- Be caring for a child who cannot remain at home due to safeguarding concerns at the request of the London Borough of Havering
- Be a Connected Person in respect of the child under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010. Children are placed under Regulation 24 because of the existing relationship that they have with the adult(s).
- Be assessed as Temporary Foster Carers (Regulation 24) through the required Havering procedures
- Be approved as Temporary Foster Carers by the Agency Decision Maker

3.10 Or have:

- Attended Skills to Foster training or completed equivalent training where this is not possible due to distance
- Been assessed presented and approved by the Fostering panel with a positive recommendation
- Been approved as a foster carer by the Agency Decision Maker

3.Fees

3.11 For children placed as in 3.9 - they can remain placed for a maximum of 16 weeks.

3.12 The temporary approval will be for a specific child and can be extended by a further 8 weeks on the recommendation of the Fostering panel and with the agreement of the Agency Decision Maker.

3.13 As with all foster carers the level of allowance for temporary foster carers is age related.

3.14 Where the placement is likely to extend beyond 16 weeks, the temporary foster carers may not wish to undertake approval as a foster carer. They will have the option of applying for alternative ways of caring for the child, including Special Guardianship Orders. Any financial remuneration through this route will be considered under the Havering Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Order Procedures and Allowances.

3.15 If the carers make the decision to continue to be foster carers for the child beyond 16 weeks they will be assessed as with all other foster carers. As in paragraph 3.10 they will need to complete Skills To Foster training in the same way as any new applicant. This completed assessment will then be presented to Fostering panel and the agency decision maker for approval.

3.16 Once approved as foster carers they will have exactly the same opportunities to access training, support and to achieve higher fee levels as any other foster carer approved by Havering Council.

3.17 Where there are delays in securing alternative orders beyond the maximum 24 weeks approved temporary foster carers be assessed as with all other foster carers. They will be offered preparation training in the same way as any new applicant. They will be assessed and then be presented to Fostering panel and the agency decision maker for approval

Fee Level 2

3.18 To be eligible for payment at Fee Level 2, Fee Level 1 foster carers will need to achieve the following:

- To be approved as a foster carer for a minimum of 1 year
- To complete the Training Support and Development Standards (TSDS) Workbook for Foster carers or Friends and Family Carers.
- To have attended at least 4 core training courses and 4 carers support groups during each year- where carers are fostering as a couple, this is an individual requirement. This does not include informal coffee mornings but can include learning and development via videos, reflective logs, small group discussion topics etc.
- To have gained sufficient experience in fostering. The level of experience required will be to have provided foster care for at least one child for at least six months. The 6 months could be caring for the same child for a continuous period, or include caring for several children, not necessarily over a continuous period, so long as the total period of time they have children placed is 6 months or greater. Break or supplementary support care periods where foster carers are not caring for children will not count towards the 6 months required

3.Fees

- Attended all professional meetings and adhered to statutory requirements in terms of meeting timescales and providing information as requested
- Had an Annual Foster Carer Review with a positive recommendation for on-going approval
- Completed daily electronic records which are submitted to the SSW at least weekly, regarding the child(ren) in their care.

3.19 The recommendation that the foster carer moves to Fee Level 2 will be made at the foster carer's review meeting. The foster carer has responsibility to submit evidence that they have met the criteria and this must be supported by the supervising social worker.

3.20 The Team Manager of the Fostering Team must endorse the recommendation and the final decision to progress will be made by the Head of Service for the fostering service.

3.21 If this is agreed, payments will be backdated to the date the Head of Service makes the decision.

3.22 To maintain Level 2, the foster carer will be expected to:

- Continue to attend 4 core training courses and 4 carers support groups each year and can include learning and development via videos, reflective logs, small group discussion topics etc. Where carers are fostering as a couple, this is an individual requirement
- Continue to be available for placements as agreed through their approval. Any period of unavailability due to particular circumstances may be agreed with the Supervising Social Worker and will not affect payments.
- Continue to maintain a high standard of care to children placed
- Continue to attend all professional meetings and adhere to statutory requirements in terms of meeting timescales and providing information as requested
- Continue to complete daily electronic records, submitted at least weekly to the SSW regarding the child(ren) in their care.
- Continue to participate in Annual Foster Carer Reviews with a positive recommendation for on-going approval.

3.23 The level will be reviewed annually at the foster carer review.

Fee Level 3

3.24 To be eligible for payment at Fee Level 3, a foster carer will be required to:

- Complete the TSDS workbook.
- Have been a Level 2 foster carer for at least two years
- To have attended at least 4 core training courses and 4 carers support groups during each year- where carers are fostering as a couple, this is an individual requirement. This does not include informal coffee mornings but can include learning and development via videos, reflective logs, small group discussion topics etc.

3.Fees

- Have experience of providing foster care for a child for at least 18 months. This can be 18 months for one child or 18 months made up of caring for several children, not necessarily over a continuous period, so long as the total period of time they have children placed is 18 months or greater. Break or supplementary support care periods where foster carers are not caring for children will not count towards the 18 months required
- Attend all professional meetings and adhere to statutory requirements in terms of meeting timescales and providing information as requested
- Have had 3 Annual Foster Carer Reviews with a positive recommendation for on-going approval
- Complete daily electronic records, submitted at least weekly to the SSW regarding the child(ren) in their care.
- Participate in the recruitment of further foster carers at events and Skills To Foster.
- Assist with recruitment, mentoring and buddying other less experienced foster carers.

3.25 The recommendation that the foster carer moves to Fee Level 3 will be made at a foster carer's review meeting. The foster carer has responsibility to submit evidence that they have met the criteria and this must be supported by the supervising social worker, manager and Reviewing Officer.

3.26 The Team Manager of the Fostering Team must endorse the recommendation and the final decision to progress will be made by the Head of Service. If this is agreed, payments will be backdated to the date of the Head of Service's decision.

3.27 To maintain Fee Level 3 the foster carer will be required to:

- Continue to offer one of the services outlined above
- Be open to consider all proposed placement requests
- Continue to attend 4 core training courses and 4 carers support groups each year- where carers are fostering as a couple, this is an individual requirement This does not include informal coffee mornings but can include learning and development via videos, reflective logs, small group discussion topics etc.
- Continue to be available for placements as agreed through their approval. Any period of unavailability due to particular circumstances may be agreed with the Supervising Social Worker and will not affect payments.
- Continue to maintain a high standard of care to children placed
- Continue to attend all professional meetings and adhere to statutory requirements in terms of meeting timescales and providing information as requested
- Continue to complete electronic daily records, submitted at least weekly to the SSW regarding the child(ren) in their care.
- Continue to participate in an Annual Foster Carer Review with a positive recommendation for on-going approval.

3.28 A Level 3 foster carer may decide to revert to Level 2 at any time.

3.Fees

Fee Level 4

3.29 Foster Carers Levels 4 and 5 are specifically targeted at experienced foster carers looking after young people with multiple complex needs (ie CSE; gangs; substance misuse, missing, risk of placement breakdown, mental health, significant behavioral challenge etc).

3.30 To be eligible for Level 4 and Level 5, a foster carer will be required to:

- Complete the TSDS workbook.
- To have attended at least 4 core training courses and 4 carers support groups during each year-where carers are fostering as a couple, this is an individual requirement. This does not include informal coffee mornings but can include learning and development via videos, reflective logs, small group discussion topics etc.
- Have experience of providing foster care or gained relevant child care experience in another setting for at least 18 months.
- Attend all professional meetings and adhere to statutory requirements in terms of meeting timescales and providing information as requested
- Complete daily electronic records, submitted at least weekly to the SSW regarding the child(ren) in their care.
- Participate with recruitment, mentoring and buddying other less experienced foster carers.

3.31 In addition to the above Level 4 and Level 5 Foster Carers should also meet the following criteria:

- Be able and willing to go the extra mile for children and young people regardless of the challenges
- Be able and willing to care for children who meet multiple complex needs according to Havering council Children's Matrix indicator.
- Be able to work closely with social work intervention to help facilitate a return home and/or work to move a child on to independence.
- To provides support for at least the first month where a child returns home or moves to independence.
- Willing to learn systemic concepts and implement them during direct work with a young person and work in close partnership with therapists, education and other professionals.
- Carers may revert to a previous level at any time and when the placement does not reach the threshold a Level 4 or Level 5 enhancement.

Fee level 5

3.32 Same criteria as level 4 but for intended for placements for those young people with enhanced multiple complex support needs, ie constant support or activity requirements or increased supervision/attendance due to health, social, emotional or mobility needs.

3.Fees

Enhancements For Children With Additional Needs

3.33 The majority of children looked after by the local authority will have additional needs compared to the majority of the population. These additional needs are recognised in the setting of the allowance. Some of these children and young people will also be eligible for DLA or for children over 16 the Personal Independence Payment (PIP). For the purposes of the payment scheme this is considered an additional enhancement to be spent on the care of this child. Is it still called DLA/PIP

3.34 However children with disabilities may incur additional expenditure to ensure that their needs are met. For instance, a child who requires greater assistance with their personal care needs may require additional washing to be undertaken in the household, and a more frequent replacement of clothing and personal items than would be the case for another child, increased transport costs due to attendance at medical or professional appointments or other activities. .

3.35 Where a child has a disability, the Local Authority may decide to enhance the allowance for the child. In very exceptional cases this may reflect fee levels 4 and 5.

3.36 Enhancements are decided at a pre-placement planning meeting and authorised by a Head of Service. Enhancements will be reviewed on a regular basis and Head of Service must agree to the continuation of payments.

3.37 The majority of other issues should be covered by the fostering allowance; however, consideration will be given to making additional one-off payments in exceptional circumstances. Such decisions will be made by the Head of Service on a case by case basis following assessment by the supervising social worker and agreement from the Deputy and Fostering Team Manager.

Reviewing Levels

3.38 Fee levels will be considered at each foster carer review. Foster carers can move up or down levels.

3.39 Where the foster carer has not achieved the requirements set out above, the reasons for this need to be discussed. Where there are extenuating circumstances, these can be presented to the Fostering Team Manager and/or Head of Service and an Action Plan set out to address any shortfall. Any Action Plan will include a date for review.

3.40 In general where foster carers do not meet fee level requirements they will move down one level.

3.41 A number of long established carers now live some distance from Havering and the Fostering Team Manager can consider alternative learning for some sessions where it would be unreasonable to ask carers to travel.

3.42 Where the recommendation of the foster carer review is that the foster carer has not maintained their Fee Level status and there are no extenuating circumstances, this should be presented to the Head of Service for a decision on the appropriate level of payment.

3.Fees

3.43 If the foster carer does not agree with the decision, they should be advised that they have the right of ask for a review to be carried out by the Head of Service.

3.44 The foster carer has 14 days from the date of the review to write or email to the Head of Service giving their reasons for disagreement.

3.45 The Head of Service has 14 days in which to reply.

3.46 If the Head of Service accepts the reasons for disagreement, then an Action Plan as set out in paragraph 3.33 will be developed.

3.47 If the Head of Service endorses the recommendation to reduce the level, then the foster carer will be provided with information regarding the Complaints Procedure.

4. Additional Payments

Religious Festivals and Birthdays

4.1 Foster carers will be expected to provide gifts for birthday and religious festivals as appropriate and to have budgeted for this from the child's allowance. In addition to this two extra allowances- Christmas/religious festival and birthday- will be paid for each child in placement as financial support towards these celebrations. Each allowance will be £100.

4.2 If the child or foster family are members of a different religion and wish to have the additional payment made at a specific time of year, this can be arranged. It is expected that all of these allowances will be spent directly on the child and foster carers should always keep receipts.

4.3 Foster carers should consider providing presents that reflect the child's development including education and social needs. Examples are educational books and games, bicycles, mobile phones and driving lessons.

4.4 Consideration should also be given to saving some of the birthday/religious festival money for the child/young person in order to create a "nest egg" for them when they leave the placement.

4.5 Where parents or relatives give money to a foster carer for a child or young person, the foster carer must give this person a receipt in the form of a note stating date and amount. The foster carer should make a note in their daily records of receiving the money and record how it has been used. Under no circumstances should carers accept money for themselves from the child's family. This would be considered as serious misconduct and could lead to termination of a carer's approval.

Holiday Payments for children/young people placed

4.6 In order to facilitate holiday expenses, one payment in each financial year will be available for every child who has been in placement for longer than 2 weeks with a full time carer.

The rate depends on age and is paid as follows:

- Children aged 0 to 4 - £215
- Children aged 5 to 10 - £275
- Children aged 11 to 15 - £300
- Young people aged 16 to 18 - £325.

4.7 This money will be paid to individual carers, usually each June/July to enable summer trips/holidays/activities. Foster carers are not permitted at any time to take looked after children on holiday during school time.

4. Additional Payments

Clothing

4.8 Foster carers are expected to budget for clothing from the child's allowance. In exceptional cases, an initial payment for clothing of up to £100 will be paid on placement if the child has no clothing or only very minimal clothing. Spending on initial clothing should be proportional to the amount of time a child may be in placement, especially if a child is placed as an emergency out of hours but this should be authorised by the social work manager/Head of Service at the time of placement.

4.9 A school uniform grant will be paid when a child starts at a new school. The grant will be for up to £100 for a primary school age child and up to £200 for a secondary school age child. Authorisation for uniforms should be sought in advance via the supervising social worker or the child's Social Worker, to the Head of Service for the children's social worker. Foster carers are expected to replace school uniform items from their weekly allowance.

4.10 The expectation for the minimum amount of clothing that each child will have is set out in the Foster Carer's Handbook. It is expected that each child will have at least this amount of good quality clothing, which fits.

4.11 Each child should have sufficient luggage to carry their belongings. Under no circumstances should black plastic sacks be used to transport a child's belongings. Supervising social workers will check that there is sufficient clothing and luggage available.

4.12 Foster carers are expected to use NHS services for dental or optical needs. Any specialist treatment or equipment requiring reimbursement must first be discussed and agreed via the child's social worker and receipts provided.

Equipment

4.13 On approval, new foster carers are expected to have a room that has basic items/equipment such as bed, mattress, wardrobe, chest of drawers, car seats, cot, buggy etc. The Local Authority will consider requests to purchase specific equipment that is required over and above the basic requirements.

4.14 Foster carers are expected to keep their house in good repair and replace such items as necessary and on an ongoing basis.

4.15 Where a child has a specific disability Havering will provide any specialist equipment that is needed and liaise as appropriate with partners in Health.

4.16 Where a child moves, consideration should be given as to whether it is appropriate that any specific equipment or furniture moves with him or her.

4.17 Over time, foster carers will generally be expected to replace equipment as required from the child's allowance. If there is exceptional wear and tear on equipment, due to a child's disability or behaviour, this should be reviewed at the foster carer's annual review.

4. Additional Payments

4.18 Foster carers must have full buildings (where appropriate) and household Contents Insurance on their property, and should declare that they are Foster Carers.

4.19 If equipment is destroyed or damaged by a child or young person in placement, the foster carer will be expected to claim on their household insurance if they wish to replace the equipment. The department will reimburse the carer any excess payment due on their insurance policy up to £250. The Local Authority will give consideration to paying any amount not covered in full by the foster carer's household insurance on a case by case basis taking into consideration the circumstances, including any fault on the part of the foster carer.

4.20 The Local Authority will not make payment for any equipment that is destroyed or damaged by a child or young person in placement where the foster carer's insurance company refuses to make payment due to the fault of the foster carer, such as failing to declare relevant information or failing to keep up payments to the insurance company. (See section on Insurance for further details)

Extra Curricular Activities

4.21 It is important that looked after children are able to benefit from a range of activities. Many of these can be met through the foster care allowance, which has provision for activities.

4.22 Day school trips should be paid for out of the allowance for each child up to the maximum cost of £100 per academic year. Any additional costs should be discussed with the child's social worker.

4.23 In addition, foster carers should contribute up to £100 towards any residential school trip. As residential school trips may require additional funding, a top up may be available from either the child's Pupil Premium or the Virtual School. There will be a limit of additional funding for one residential school trip per school year for each child.

4.24 Money is available in the allowance for each child to cover the cost of out of school activities. Carers are encouraged to allow children to experience different opportunities and to become members of clubs and groups to enhance their self-esteem as well as to encourage any particular talents or interests. There is an expectation that carers will spend a minimum of £10 per child per week towards these activities.

4.25 If there is a particular piece of equipment needed to allow a child to undertake a specific activity, then this can also be considered. Such requests need to be considered on a case-by-case basis. Factors such as the amount of commitment that a child has demonstrated need to be taken into account. The activity should also be related to the needs of the child and discussed with the child's social worker.

4.26 Where a child attends a holiday play scheme, this will generally be the financial responsibility of the foster carer. The Head of Service will consider requests for payment of play schemes where there are exceptional circumstances (for example if it is agreed that the child has particularly challenging behaviour or because of a profound level of disability).

4.27 Any extra-curricular activities should be negotiated via the Virtual school and the Childs Social Worker ie music lessons, tutorials etc

4. Additional Payments

Holiday Payments for carers

4.28 Each full time active foster carer family will receive one payment of £200 of holiday pay per financial year. Foster carers who have not been approved for a full year will receive an amount proportionate to the time that they have been available for placements (allocated at £50 per quarter per fostering household).

Retainers

4.29 Where a foster carer is being retained to offer a placement for a particular child, they will receive £60 per week (or portion of week) for the period of the retainer. This can be agreed for a period of up to four weeks at the discretion of the Head of Service. In exceptional circumstances, the Head of Service may agree an extension or agree a lower rate for a longer period.

4.30 Where foster carers have had placements and are without a placement a £60 per week retainer will be paid per foster family if a placement is not made after 2 weeks (14 days), from the last placement leaving. Foster Carers must be available within the whole time frame to take placements to qualify for this retainer. It is the carer's responsibility to inform their supervising social worker that this fee is to be paid and that they are available to accept a placement. It will be paid for a maximum period of 6 weeks.

4.31 Retainers are not paid to foster carers who regularly provide supplementary support care or for newly approved foster carers, until they have had their first placement. Retainers will not be paid for those carers living more than 10 miles outside of the boroughs boundaries due to the difficulties in finding appropriate placements and where placements offered within the foster carers' approval category are refused.

Additional travelling expenses

4.32 It is an expectation that foster carers will provide transport for the child in their care and that costs are covered within the child's allowance. This includes transport to school and to contact. However when a foster carer is undertaking significant travelling (currently set at over 60 miles a week) the excess can be reimbursed.

4.33 Claims must be made within 3 months of the travel and will be paid at the current local authority mileage rate (currently 42p per mile). Foster carers should submit their claims on the foster carer mileage claim form, available from the fostering team. The mileage claim form should show the total weekly mileage evidencing the travel costs associated with essential travel for each looked after child. It is appropriate to record the deducted 60 miles from the weekly claim so the whole claim is evidenced for the purposes of our internal audit requirements.

Any claims submitted after three months will not be payable.

4. Additional Payments

Emergency Rota

4.34 Carers on the rota - usually referred to as the EDT (Emergency Duty Team) rota - will be available to take emergency placements out of hours. Placements will be (either male or female) within the foster carer's approved age range and numbers through the Children's Emergency Duty Team.

4.35 Foster carers on the emergency rota will be on duty for one week at a time and will be paid an agreed weekly fee of £90 for being "on call". If a carer is on duty for a proportion of the week, they will be paid a pro rata proportion of the weekly rate. Any placements made will be paid at the appropriate allowance and fee level.

Support Fostering

4.36 Where foster carers provide support fostering this should always be with the agreement of their supervising social worker. This will be at an hourly rate of £10 an hour per child and must be agreed before the episode takes place. There will not be any payment for baby-sitting for social purposes.

In circumstances where Foster Carers need additional support outside of their network to attend training this should be discussed with the Supervising Social Worker.

Insurance

4.37 Havering Council provides Public Liability cover to its foster carers up to the value of £50 million.

4.38 Foster carers must take out adequate household insurance (both building and contents) and inform their insurers in writing that they are foster carers. Failure to provide insurers with this information could result in insurers refusing to honour any claim, even if the specific claim does not relate to a foster child. Supervising social workers will check for evidence that carers have adequate insurance cover on an annual basis.

4.39 Foster carers must ensure that they have suitable car insurance and should inform their insurance company in writing that they are fostering. Foster carers are expected, with their insurance company, to ensure that they are covered for any liability in relation to transporting foster children. All cars must have a valid MOT certificate and tax payment where applicable. Supervising social workers will check for evidence that carers have adequate insurance cover and an MOT certificate on an annual basis.

4.40 Any child may accidentally lose or damage small household items from time to time, and the cost of replacing items in these circumstances is covered in the weekly fostering allowance. It is recognised that foster children may cause more loss or damage than other children. Foster carers should claim from their own insurance policies should the costs be high. The Council will reimburse any excess that the carers need to pay as a result of any such claim up to £250.

4. Additional Payments

4.41 There is an expectation that foster carers take all reasonable precautions to avoid losses and damage to property. This includes keeping valuable items such as cash, credit cards and jewellery in a safe and secure place. Where children are routinely causing damage it is expected that the child's social worker, supervising social worker and foster carer meet to agree an appropriate plan to manage such situations.

4.42 The Fostering Service pays the membership fees to Foster Talk for all approved foster carers that entitle carers to advice and support including tax advice.

4.43 For more information on your entitlements please contact:

Foster Talk
Oak Tree House
Waterside
Hanbury Road
Bromsgrove
Worcestershire
B60 4FD
01527 573 790
E: enquiries@fostertalk.org

Advice Regarding Tax and Benefits

4.44 Foster carers will be given appropriate current literature from FosterTalk giving advice about their entitlements to Benefits and Tax Credits.

4.45 There is currently no distinction for Her Majesty's Customs and Revenue (HMCR) between fees and allowances. If your total receipts from providing foster care in the year do not exceed the qualifying amount, your receipts will be exempt (free) from income tax for that year. This means that, for taxation purposes, you will be treated as having no profit or loss from foster care for the year. This will not affect any other income you may have (e.g. income from employment, self-employment or savings) which will be taxed in the normal way. The qualifying amount consists of two parts to be added together:

• Your share of the fixed amount. The fixed amount is £10,000 per year for each household. If two or more carers in the same household receive separate foster care receipts they will share the £10,000 equally. If you are a registered foster carer for less than a full year you can claim a proportion of the fixed amount.

- An amount per week for each foster child placed with you (£200 a week for a child aged under 11 and £250 a week for a child aged 11 or older). Part of a week counts as a full
- More information is available on the HMRC website under Foster care relief.

4.46 Foster carers are responsible for their own tax returns

4. Additional Payments

National Insurance

4.47 Foster carers may be eligible for National Insurance contributions from the Department of Work and Pensions. Havering Council will provide a supporting letter for any foster carer who wishes to claim these contributions. Foster carers should request this through their Supervising Social Worker.

Children Missing from Placement

4.48 Where a looked after child is missing from a placement without permission, the foster carer must follow the Council's Missing Child Procedure.

4.49 Where a child is reported as missing or absent from a placement, the foster carer will be paid the age related allowance and carer fee until the child returns to placement or the placement is officially ended.

4.50 Where a child is not in placement, due to overnight school trips or staying contact with family members but is expected to return to the placement, the full fostering payment would be paid.

Glossary

| | |
|--|---|
| Foster Carer | A person or persons approved to be able to care for a child on behalf of the local authority. The approval may be on a temporary or permanent basis. |
| Foster carer payment (Joint fee plus allowance) | The total amount actually paid to a Foster carer family to care for a child on behalf of the local authority. |
| Allowance/allowance for the child | The amount paid to a foster carer family to be spent on providing appropriate care for any child placed by the local authority. |
| Fee/Fee Level | The amount of money paid to the foster carer family in recognition of their skills and commitment to the fostering task. |
| Additional Payment | A payment made to a foster carer family in addition to the Foster carer payment. |
| Supplementary Support Care (SSC) | Short period of care in an alternative, agreed arrangement. |
| Short Breaks | Where families caring for a disabled child have a series of regular breaks from the care. |
| Fostering Panel | This panel is a meeting of skilled and appropriate people who meet on a regular basis to recommend approval of foster carers and review and deregistration of foster carers. |
| Agency Decision Maker (ADM) | A designated senior officer in the local authority who, considering the recommendation of the Fostering and Permanency Panel, makes the decision about approval of foster carers and review and deregistration of foster carers. In Havering this is the Head of Service. |
| Emergency Rota (EDT) | A rota of fostering carers on duty to cover the request for placements after office hours and at weekends. |
| Fostering Team | The team in Havering who offer on going supervision of foster carers and undertake foster carer review and recruit and assessment of foster carers. |
| Head of Service, Care Resources | The senior manager in Havering who has overall responsibility for the fostering service. The Head of Service is responsible to the Director. |
| Director of Service | The senior manager with overall responsibility for all children's social care services. |

Fostering Fees

Weekly Allowances Per Child

| Age Range | Allowance (£) |
|-----------|---------------|
| 0-10 | 186 |
| 11-15 | 231 |
| 16-17 | 281 |

Weekly Allowance For Foster Carers

| Level | 0-10 | 11-15 | 16-17 |
|---------|------|-------|-------|
| Level 1 | 168 | 231 | 196 |
| Level 2 | 213 | 261 | 226 |
| Level 3 | 239 | 282 | 252 |
| Level 4 | 314 | 337 | 362 |
| Level 5 | 421 | 444 | 469 |

Fostering Fees

The tables below summarise the combined effect of the weekly allowance and the fee, making the Weekly Fostering Payment.

0 to 10 Years

| Level | Rate (£) |
|---------|----------|
| Level 1 | 354 |
| Level 2 | 399 |
| Level 3 | 425 |
| Level 4 | 500 |
| Level 5 | 607 |

11 to 15 years

| Level | Rate (£) |
|---------|----------|
| Level 1 | 462 |
| Level 2 | 492 |
| Level 3 | 513 |
| Level 4 | 568 |
| Level 5 | 675 |

16 to 17 years

| Level | Rate (£) |
|---------|----------|
| Level 1 | 477 |
| Level 2 | 507 |
| Level 3 | 533 |
| Level 4 | 643 |
| Level 5 | 750 |

Appendix A

National Minimum Fostering Allowances

Local authorities are responsible for the maintenance of looked after children. Where a child is placed in foster care, the cost of caring for the child is paid to the foster carer in the form of a fostering allowance. To ensure that no foster carer is out of pocket because of their caring role, a national minimum allowance (NMA) was introduced. These rates are published annually by Gov.UK.

Minimum Weekly Allowance – April 2021 to 05 April 2022

| Weekly rates | 0-2 yrs | 3-4 yrs | 5-10 yrs | 11-15 yrs | 16-17 yrs |
|-----------------|---------|---------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| Rest of England | 134 | 138 | 152 | 173 | 202 |
| South East | 149 | 153 | 169 | 193 | 226 |
| London | 155 | 158 | 177 | 202 | 235 |

Tax Free Earning

Tax Exemption

There's a fixed tax exemption of up to £10,000 per year (less if for a shorter period) which is shared equally among any foster carers in the same household. This means you don't have to pay tax on the first £10,000 income (after expenses) you make from fostering.

Tax Relief

On top of the £10,000 exemption, you also get tax relief for every week (or part week) that a child is in your care. This means you don't have to pay tax on some of your earnings over £10,000.

| Age of Child | Tax Relief |
|--------------|----------------|
| Under 11 | £200 per child |
| Over 11 | £250 per child |

Example

Laura is a foster carer for a 14-year-old for the whole of the year and for an 8-year-old for 10 weeks of the year. She doesn't have to pay tax on the first £25,000 she earns:

Tax exemption = £10,000
 +
 Child 1 (52 x £250) = £13,000
 +
 Child 2 (10 x £200) = £2,000

Total = £25,000

Appendix B

Emergency Fostering Equipment – Allowance Guidance

If a foster carer is already in receipt of payments the child element should be used to purchase required equipment.

Where required urgently, i.e. in the case of emergency placements, the following may be considered if there is not one in the placement but payment will need to be authorised by Head of Service prior to purchase.

| | | |
|-----------------------|---------|---|
| Single Bed & Mattress | £200 | |
| Cot | £180 | |
| Cot Mattress | £30 | For every new baby placed |
| Pushchair | £130 | |
| Car Seats | £40-100 | Depending on the age of the child and Stage of car seat required. |
| Child Safety Gates | £40 | |
| High Chair | £50 | |

Please note, financial support to purchase equipment will be considered in emergency situations only. The expectation is that a foster carer should be set up with the relevant equipment to support a placement. (ie bed, bedding, wardrobe). If a child moves placement, equipment purchased for that child should move with them.

2023-2024



Havering
LONDON BOROUGH