

Financial Support to Foster Carers (FN16) 2018-19

Introduction

The aim of this document is to provide information that covers allowances, fees and other payments provided to foster carers together with detailed guidance on their application.

Leeds City Council operates a 4 level Payment for Skills (PFS) model. Payments to 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 *Fee* depending on the PFS level the carer operates on and the number of children in placement.

(Allowance and Fee 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
- Fees and related guidance
- Other financial and material support for foster carers
- Payments procedures, decision making and related guidance

Weekly Maintenance Allowance

- 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.

Allowance Amounts

- 2 Weekly Allowance amounts are normally reviewed annually (April) and detailed in the appendix to this document.

Breakdown of the Weekly Maintenance Allowance:

- 3 The following % category breakdown is provided as guidance for utilising the weekly allowance. Foster Carers are expected to exercise some 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	64%	22%	8%	6%	100%
5-10yrs	59%	25%	8%	8%	100%
11-15yrs	59%	20%	11%	10%	100%
16yrs+	54%	20%	9%	17%	100%

What the Weekly Maintenance Allowance covers:

- 4 The following list is provided for guidance but this 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 / activities
 - Life Story Work materials / costs
 - Transport costs to support and achieve placement commitments
 - Luggage costs associated with children's placement moves
- 4.1 Foster carers providing Supported Lodgings placements for young people age 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>Pocket Money</p> <p>(included in Personal %)</p> <p>Suggested Amounts Age:</p> <p>10yrs: £3.50 11yrs: £5.00 12yrs: £6.00 13yrs: £7.00 14yrs: £8.00 15yrs: £9.00 16yrs+ £10.00</p>	<p>Pocket Money weekly amounts suggested are for children and young people age 10yrs and over for their general and personal requirements and are based on Fostering Network guidance supported by the Leeds Foster Carer Association (LFCA). Foster carers should use the suggested amounts as a guide but agree amounts for pocket money age appropriate to an individual child's needs / age / understanding and following discussion with the child's / young person's social worker.</p> <p>It is suggested that for young people 16yrs+ the amount of pocket money agreed should not exceed the element for personal needs within any benefit payment a young person could expect if they were unemployed. This encourages realistic expectations and assists with transitions to adulthood. Foster carers with children under ten should use the pocket money allowance to cover the costs of activities, comics, etc.</p>
<p>Clothing and Footwear</p> <p>(included in Clothing %)</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 use of the allowance will differ between individuals but for older children this can be agreed by the foster carer, Supervising Social Worker (SSW) and the child / young person's SW / Personal Advisor where appropriate.</p>
<p>Savings for older children / Young People preparing for independence age 16yrs +</p> <p>£5.00 per week minimum is suggested</p>	<p>As a broad principle, it should be the aim to encourage older fostered children and young people to develop a custom of saving money for their future life and needs, particularly young people age 16yrs + preparing for independence. Older children and young people should be encouraged by foster carers (and by agreement with them) to develop a 'savings habit' by saving a regular weekly amount.</p> <p>A regular amount agreed from the weekly allowance personal or clothing element may be utilised for this purpose and paid directly into a savings account following agreement between the young person, Foster Carer and SW.</p>

	<p>For younger children an amount could be added to their Junior ISA and for young people it could be used to set up a tax free savings account (I.S.A). When children or young people transfer between placements the savings account should also transfer with them.</p> <p>The young person's social worker, with support from the supervising social worker (fostering) and foster carers should assist a child/young person to open a bank account in the name of the child/young person wherever this is possible.</p> <p>Young people (16+) who are receiving income from employment should be encouraged to save some of their clothing and pocket money allowance.</p>
<p>Travel / Mileage (From Transport %)</p> <p>The Allowance Transport % covers the first 35 Miles of Transport or £16.00 worth of Travel per week.</p> <p>Additional Mileage claims will be paid at @ £0.45p per mile.</p> <p>School Plus Metro Card</p>	<p>The Weekly Allowance provides for the cost of 35 miles of travel per fostered child / young person per week related to supporting the following placement commitments:</p> <p>supporting contact; health appointments; educational attendance; court attendance; approved training attendance; supporting a child / young person's agreed specific leisure activity / hobby.</p> <p>If carers incur additional mileage costs (for supporting the above placement commitments) over the 35 miles allocated in the allowance, 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 SSW and agreed by the Fostering Team Manager.</p> <p>No more than 3 months' worth of retrospective claims will be considered.</p> <p>Carers should discuss any issues or queries regarding mileage claims / journey reason with their SSW before submitting the claim form. Mileage claim forms are periodically audited.</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 Leeds 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>

Taxis	Taxi fares will only be reimbursed in exceptional circumstances. Disabled children may have transport provided to access school, play schemes etc. according to the same criteria as other disabled children who are not looked after.
<p>Leisure / Activities</p> <p>Exceptional Leisure / Learning / Activities costs not covered in the Allowance</p> <p>MAX Card / Breeze Card / Junior Bodyline Card</p> <p>Corporate Offers and Discounts for Foster Carers & Foster Families</p>	<p>Foster Carers are encouraged to enable children and young people to take part in appropriate agreed leisure activities and take part in educational day trips etc.</p> <p>Where appropriate, a proportion of the Allowance should be used to pay for these and for the membership of a hobby or leisure club and/or contribute towards the cost of a social activity at least once weekly.</p> <p>Some children may have an interest / hobby where the cost is significantly higher than provided for in the allowance. For example, weekly horse-riding lessons are expensive, so carers may need to consider fortnightly or monthly sessions. Some children may have music lessons, and the foster carer may ask for a contribution to the lesson costs or rental / purchase of an instrument.</p> <p>Foster Carers can apply for extra funding towards exceptional costs in order to support leisure / learning / activities. This must be discussed with the foster carers SSW and child's SW to establish agreement before applying via the child's SW to the Children's Service Delivery Manager (CSDM). Any decision to provide financial assistance should be time limited and reconsidered at each Child Care Review.</p> <p>Foster Carers should assist school age children in obtaining both a Breeze card and a MAX Card allowing affordable leisure and educational opportunities. Junior Bodyline cards are available from Leisure Centres for children looked after living in Leeds.</p> <p>A range of offers and discounts for Foster Carers, their family and their looked after children are available via the Council and partner organisations, including free swimming sessions and lessons, Child Friendly Leeds events and other benefits designed to maximise looked after children's leisure opportunities. Information on offers and discounts is sent periodically to foster carers and is also available via SSW's.</p>

6 Items paid in addition to the Weekly Maintenance Allowance:

Item	Guidance
<p>School Clothing</p> <p>Primary School: £100 High School: £200</p> <p>(up to maximum amounts)</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 starting Primary or High School).</p> <p>Foster Carers should discuss with their SSW who will then make an application to the Service Delivery Manager (SDM) Fostering for decision / authorisation.</p>
<p>Initial Clothing Grant</p> <p>Age Range:</p> <p>0-12yrs: £200.00 13yrs+ : £250.00</p> <p>(up to maximum amounts)</p>	<p>The Initial Clothing Grant is provided for essential items and only paid in exceptional circumstances where children/young people are in placement for the first time with insufficient clothing for their needs. (A % of the weekly allowance is designated to meet ongoing clothing needs – see p3, 'Clothing & Footwear').</p> <p>Applications for the Initial Clothing Grant should be made via the child's SW to the SDM Fostering following discussion with the foster carer and foster carer's SSW identifying the essential clothing items required. The SDM Fostering can exercise discretion on the amount approved (up to and including the maximum amount allowed).</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 the child's SW and carers SSW should ensure that this is completed. When a child moves placement, the inventory form should go with the child. The child's SW should keep a copy of the form.</p> <p>(Support Care Scheme foster carers do not access the Initial Clothing Allowance but can discuss alternative funding arrangements with the Support Scheme Co-ordinator).</p>
<p>Birthday Allowance</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 made automatically for a child's birthday. The Birthday Allowance is provided to purchase a gift or gifts and to provide a contribution towards the cost of celebrations.</p>
<p>Christmas/ Festival Allowance</p>	<p>A grant equal to one week's maintenance allowance appropriate to the age of the child will be made at Christmas, payable automatically for all children in foster placements.</p>

1 Weeks Allowance	<p>The Christmas/Festival Allowance is provided to purchase a gift or gifts and to provide a contribution towards the cost of celebrations.</p> <p>If the allowance is required for an alternative religious festival, a request should be made via the child's SW.</p>
<p>Annual Holiday Allowance</p> <p>2 Weeks Allowance</p> <p>Spectacles/Contact Lenses/other health needs</p>	<p>The Annual Holiday Allowance equivalent to two weeks Allowance per child (age related) is provided as a contribution towards a major holiday or for an equivalent number of day trips.</p> <p>The Allowance is normally paid to the foster carer annually in the first week of July.</p> <p>In certain and exceptional circumstances, a 2nd holiday allowance may be considered where a child or young person moves between placements in the summer months. The Annual Holiday Allowance is paid in addition to the weekly allowance and should be used to contribute towards expenses associated with taking the child or young person on holiday.</p> <p>Carers of children who were placed with them on or after the first week of July need to apply through the child's SW for the holiday allowance.</p> <p>If carers are undertaking overseas travel, adequate travel insurance must be obtained, and a copy of the policy provided for the child's SW. Appropriate consent is required for all trips where children will be taken out of the country (as detailed in Children's Procedures).</p> <p>(Support Carers would not normally receive Annual Holiday Allowance. Alternative funding for day trips / activities can be discussed with the Support Carer scheme coordinator)</p> <p>Consideration will be given via the child's social worker for costs additional to NHS provision for spectacles and contact lenses. Consideration will be given via the child's social worker to meet additional costs in connection with enuresis if this is part of a specific and reviewed plan to address the issue.</p>

Foster Carer Fees

- 7 Payment for Skills (PFS) Level 2, 3 and 4 foster carers are paid a weekly fee, dependent on the PFS level for which they are approved. The fee levels reflect the PFS Tasks, Skills and Competencies (TSC) requirements for that level. Level 1 is where weekly maintenance allowances only are paid.

The PFS fee structure and weekly fee amounts are detailed in the Appendix.

- 8 Fees are distinct from maintenance weekly allowance payments. Fees provide financial reward to foster carers following a matching of their skills and competencies and their ability to undertake specified tasks to levels within the PFS framework. (Specific fee arrangements for Parent and Child foster carers are published separately).

Financial Enhancement

- 9 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.
- 10 Arrangements for enhancement must be approved by the Head of Service and will relate to circumstances where:
- i) The foster carer experiences financial disadvantage as a result of his/her placement commitments.
 - ii) The foster carer has time-limited and exceptional tasks that are driven by specific outcomes and the needs of the service

Fees and Payments to Out of Hours Emergency (EDT) Foster Carers

- 11 Foster Carers providing EDT placements receive a disruption fee rate of £40 per placement per day for up to 7 days. This fee is payable irrespective of the Foster Carer PFS level. An additional £10 per placement per day is payable for the provision of 'PACE' / Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker (UAS) placements via EDT. After 7 days, fee payments revert to the carer's normal PFS level rate.
- 12 Fee and maintenance allowance payments for the foster carers' substantive placement/s continue unchanged.

(Allowances are paid for EDT placements on a 1/7th per day basis).

Placement Retainer Fees (PFS Level 4 only)

Existing Level 4 Carers approved prior to November 2014:

- 13 In the gap between placements, existing Level 4 carers registered for one placement, will be paid one full fee per household per week for a maximum of 52 weeks (except for unpaid leave and sickness arrangements) in any one financial year.
- 14 For carers approved for two or more placements, a 2nd placement retainer will be paid for one ten week period only in any one financial year. This is paid at a rate of 50% of the difference between the one and two placement rate. This will not be paid if the vacancy is a room share with another child in placement.
- 15 In exceptional circumstances, the SDM Fostering may exercise discretion to retain highly specialist second placements for periods in excess of ten weeks.

Level 4 carers following approval from November 2014:

- 16 In the gap between placements, Level 4 carers approved from November 2014 will be paid one full fee per household per week (£220) for a maximum of 16 weeks (except unpaid leave or sickness arrangements) in any one financial year.
- 17 In exceptional circumstances, the Service Delivery Manager (SDM) Fostering may exercise discretion to retain highly specialist placements for periods in excess of 16 weeks.
- 18 A retainer for newly approved level 4 carers can be paid during introductory period following matching. In exceptional circumstances and subject to SDM Fostering approval, the retainer can be paid from the point of approval until the first placement is made.

Annual leave and agreed planned respite payments

- 19 Paid leave entitlement (also sometimes referred to as 'Holiday') is available for PFS Level 2, 3 and 4 foster carers to take in any one financial year period (April – April) outside their fostering placement commitments. This is paid at the first placement fee for the respective PFS level.
- 20 Carers registered for one placement will receive leave pay at the one placement fee level plus the clothing allowance element if the child is in placement.
- 21 The receiving foster carer taking the child for leave / holiday or planned respite purposes from the substantive carer receives the relevant fee rate based on the number of children in placement, minus the clothing element of the allowance

- 22 Approved Relatives / Friends providing leave cover (also termed 'Holiday Carers') will receive the Level 2 first placement rate.

Part Week Payments – Fees and Allowances

- 23 Where placements last for less than a week (7 days) or where they start or end halfway through a week, the rates are paid on a daily basis, pro-rata. So, for example, if a child / young person is with another carer for respite from Friday to Sunday, this counts as 3 days even though they might arrive at Friday tea time and leave before lunch on Sunday.
- 24 Each day is calculated as 1/7 of the fee normally paid to the carer, plus 1/7 of the weekly maintenance allowance for the child. The primary carer in this situation would also get the maintenance allowance on the Friday and the Sunday

Payments Procedures

- 25 Fees and allowances are paid to foster carers on a weekly basis for all placement types.
- 26 All payments for foster carers are generated by notification to the Placements Service who then informs the Carer Payments Team.
- 27 All payments are made to foster carers via the direct bank credit system.
- 28 If a request for payment is to be acted upon by Carer Payments in a particular week, notification must be provided by 12 noon of the Friday of the week before. The payment will then be made on the subsequent Thursday.
- 29 Changes in fee level will relate to changes in approved PFS level. Notifying Carer Payments is the responsibility of the SSW with authorisation from the Fostering Team Manager following ratification.
- 30 The Placements Service should be informed by the child's SW of changes in circumstances of looked after children that affect the payments made. For example, when children leave school, commence work, receive income support etc.
- 31 An Annual Financial Statement is sent to foster carers by Carer Payments 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.

Payment arrangements for Placement Introductions

- 32 Where the child is visiting a foster home for introductions and has a primary placement 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 placement with them.

- 33 Where placement 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 Head of Service / Assistant Head of Service.

Payments if Children and Young People are absent from placement

- 34 In situations where a child or young person is absent from a placement the Allowance and Fee will continue to be paid for up to 7 days.
- 35 Where exceptional cases of unusually high dependency on hospital care exist, the SDM & Team Manager (Fostering) will discuss payment arrangements with the relevant Head of Service.
- 36 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 the 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.
- 37 If a child is away at a residential school, the carer will receive their relevant PFS fee plus 1/7th of the maintenance payment for each night that the child stays in the foster home.

Payments during periods of carer illness

- 38 During periods of carer illness (definition – where children cannot be maintained in the carer household), carer's may receive in any one financial year up to 3 continuous weeks fee payments per household at a level equivalent to the fee rate being paid to them in the week immediately preceding the period of illness, plus the clothing element of the maintenance allowance, calculated on a 1/7th basis.
- 39 At the end of the 3 week period the situation will be reviewed and may be extended for a further period, the length of which and level of fee will be determined by the Head of Service / Assistant Head of Service. In making a decision to extend sick leave payments, consideration will be given to the carer's service record and sickness history.

Benefit Payments / Carers for Disabled Children

Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

- 40 All children and young people who are eligible for a specialist foster care placement for disabled children will, in principle, meet the eligibility criteria for middle or higher rate Disability Living Allowance (DLA). There will be some children placed with non-specialist foster carers who will also meet the criteria for DLA.

At the point of becoming looked after and being placed, both the statutory review and placement 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' or to the Local Authority who will be the 'Corporate Appointee'.

- 41 At the initial placement planning meeting the Family Placement Supervising Social Worker (or SSW Fostering) 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 disabled child/young person.

DLA is paid in addition to the weekly maintenance allowance, and should be used to meet the child/young person's additional needs accruing from their disability. The 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 in order to provide an audit trail of income and expenditure. 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).

Carer's Allowance

- 42 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.
- 43 Details on other Benefits for disabled young people 16 years plus (Including Employment and Support allowance and Vulnerable Young Persons Education bursaries) are included in the separate policy 'Transitions to Adulthood – Disabled Young People' (see 97).

Foster Carer Training Expenses

- 44 Transport costs to prior approved carer training and professional development activities over the 35 miles per week allocated via the weekly allowance can be reimbursed via a mileage claim form (see Travel / Mileage p4) or via production of bus / train ticket. Parking costs can also be reimbursed.
- 45 Travel expenses should be submitted by the foster carer to their Supervising Social Worker (SSW) and must be supported by relevant car mileage journey record / travel tickets and attendance certificate copies if available.
- 46 Subject to prior approval via a SSW and Team Manager (Fostering), foster carers can be reimbursed for expenses incurred whilst attending other training courses and professional development activities approved by the Department. This can include travel (as above) and child care costs (to a maximum of the current child minding rate per hour).

- 47 Subject to prior approval, expenses incurred on other approved courses can be reimbursed when authorised by a Fostering Team Manager. Carers should send all requests for expenses through their SSW who will verify and forward to the appropriate section for payment.

Holiday Vehicle Hire

- 48 Carers can apply via their SSW to have up to 1 week large vehicle hired in any one financial year where they are taking their foster children on holiday. 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.
- 49 The vehicle hire budget is strictly limited and is monitored. Requests for hire over and above the 1 week period will only be considered in exceptional circumstances by the SDM Fostering.
- 50 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. The latter will require the foster carer to take a minibus test and in order to achieve this requires considerable advance booking. If taking the hired vehicle abroad, any additional insurance costs incurred are payable by the carer.
- 60 Where a child placed with a carer is a wheelchair user, the DLA mobility allowance will not always cover the cost of purchase or hire of an adapted vehicle. In these situations a top up payment will be considered.

Equipment and Furniture provision

- 61 The intention of this set budget is to support newly approved carers with initial set up costs for essential furniture and equipment. Sometimes an existing carer will need additional essential equipment for a new placement e.g. a car seat.

Essential furniture and equipment items provided include: beds / bunk beds / mattress / bedding / cot / chest of drawers / wardrobe / car seat / baby equipment / safety gate.

- 62 Furniture and equipment is supplied via the Department's approved contractors. Furniture and equipment orders are processed by Fostering Administration via the foster carers SSW, authorised by a Fostering Team Manager, Placements Service Manager or SDM Fostering. 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 SSW.

- 63 Family Placement Carers may require additional specialist equipment to meet the needs of a disabled child.

The Family Placement Service has a partnership agreement with a specialist equipment provider and can utilise their own small specialist equipment budget. Specialist equipment for disabled children will normally be provided following an OT assessment.

Property Adaptations

- 64 The funding of any property adaptations and installations for foster carer households will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.
- 65 Requests for adaptations to rented property should first be made through the landlord / existing protocol for Leeds City Council housing. If it is considered to be helpful, the SDM Fostering may wish to support the application following a joint discussion with the child's SW and the foster carers SSW.
- 66 Where significant amounts of funding are requested, it is good practice for the child's SW and the carer's SSW to show evidence of discussion with their respective managers, and to make a joint written submission to the SDM (Fostering), copied to their Team Managers and the SDM. Any requests for funding should then be presented to Finance Panel for consideration.
- 67 Family Placement 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 OT assessment. The Family Placement Service has a small adaptations budget which may be used where other sources of funding have been exhausted.

Key Documents for Looked After Children

- 68 The Department 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.
- 69 It is the responsibility of the child's SW to obtain these key documents on the child's behalf when placed in care or as soon as possible thereafter.

Foster Carer Long Service Awards

- 70 Awards are made available to foster carers as a result of length of service. Vouchers with values dependent on length of service are made available via the Fostering Service (Admin), following completion of the Foster Carer Review and the approval of a Fostering Team Manager.
- 71 Long service or retirement awards should not generally be made where the carer is deregistered for matters associated with quality of care and/or carer conduct.

Length of Service Awards Values:

Length of Service	Long Service Award (Certificate + Vouchers to the value of):
5yrs:	£50 + Flowers
10yrs:	£100 + Flowers
15yrs:	£150 + Flowers
20yrs:	£200 + Flowers and letter from the Deputy Director
Retirement after 10yrs + service:	£200 + Flowers and letter from the Deputy Director
Other length of service awards:	At the discretion of the SDM Fostering

Payments when Allegations against Carers are under investigation

- 73 Payment of fees will continue if a child is withdrawn from placement because of an allegation against a carer until the matter is resolved, or a decision is made to terminate a carer's registration. No weekly allowances will be payable.
- 74 Payment will be paid at the fee rate being received by the carer at the time the suspension took place and will continue until the Fostering Team Manager decides that the situation is resolved.
- 75 Fee Payments may be suspended immediately by the SDM (Fostering) or Head of Service / Assistant Head of Service where there is clear supported evidence of and / or carer admission of serious malpractice.
- 76 All payments during the investigation of allegations are subject to full co-operation of the 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 Manager and SDM Fostering.
- 77 Recommendations to terminate a carer's registration are taken by an appropriate Fostering Panel and ratified by the Agency Decision Maker.
- 78 The fee payment will continue for one month then cease. Should the carer successfully appeal a de-registration, reimbursement will be made only if the original decision is overturned.

Overpayment of Allowances and Fees

- 79 The Department will make every effort to ensure overpayments of fees or allowances do not occur. However, the foster carer has an individual responsibility to check all payment information received and to contact Carer Payments immediately if an overpayment does occur. In the event of an overpayment, the Department will seek to recover the full amount.
- 80 Recovery of up to 8 weeks overpayment is able to be identified by the electronic Payments System and is recovered automatically.
- 81 Where significant overpayments are identified (overpayments more than an 8 week period) these will be notified by the Carer Payments Team / Finance to the SDM Fostering. The Fostering Team Manager will liaise with the SDM Fostering, SSW and the foster carer concerned on arrangements for recovery of the full amount.
- 82 Prompt arrangements for repayment should be formally agreed as soon as possible. A minimum of 25% of the carer's current weekly payments will be deducted to recover any overpayments. (Agreement to overpayment arrangements is included in the signed Foster Carer Agreement document following carer approval).
- 83 If a member of Carer Payments disputes any payment requested, they should return the request to the person who approved the expenditure, together with an explanation of why it contravenes the guidance given. If the two parties cannot resolve the dispute, the case should be passed to a Senior Manager for a final decision.

Implementing this document

- 84 This document, though detailed, may not cover all possible situations. CSDM's, the SDM Fostering and Head of Service / Assistant Head of Service are empowered to interpret and consider exceptional individual circumstances on a case by case basis, subject to the guiding principles on which the funding of foster care provision is based.
- 85 Exceptional decisions should always be supported with the written authority of the Head of Service / Assistant 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.

Monitoring Decision Making

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

- 87 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 across city consistency and compliance with funding structures and processes.

Who can make what decision?

- 88 The detail in this document is explicit about who can make what decision and who should inform the Placements Service and the Carer Payments Team. Carer Payments staff have no authority to process an instruction to pay a carer from a SW, SSW, Team Manager, CSDM, FSDM, Assistant Head of Service or Head of Service if it is not supported with a written decision.
- 89 A “reported authority” to pay (i.e. saying that a more senior officer has agreed, but providing no written evidence of this) will not be acted on by Carer Payments. If professional staff does not send written authority, or if they do not provide the required information, then the carer concerned will not be paid.
- 90 For the purposes of guidance in this document, a ‘written authority’ is the required form where this exists, or an email from the personal mail box of the officer empowered to make the decision. Increasingly, the Department is moving to electronic notification for payment.

Importance of updating information held by Carer Payments

- 91 Carers will continue to be paid according to the most recent instruction by a member of staff until notified that circumstances have changed.
- 92 NB: It is essential when predictable patterns of care (e.g. Respite) change, or when a child moves placement, or any other relevant change takes place that Carer Payments are notified immediately. It causes difficulties for carers and for the fostering service when notification is not made promptly.

Income Tax, Welfare Benefits

- 93 Foster carers are reminded that fee 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 your SSW.
- 94 Carer Payments Team send an annual financial statement annually (April) to foster carers which should be used for fulfilling HMRC Tax return requirements.

Other Policies and Information relating to Financial Support:

95 **Policy: Staying Put**

Policy, procedures and guidance regarding young people remaining with former foster carers age 18 – 21 years.

96 **Leaflet: Staying Put / Guide for Foster Carers**

Guidance for foster carers making a Staying Put commitment including information regarding financial support.

97 **Policy: Transitions to Adulthood – Disabled Young People:**

Policy regarding transitions to adulthood / staying put for disabled children / young people.

98 **Policy: Leaving Care Finance Policy:**

Detailed information on financial support, incentives and welfare benefits entitlements for relevant and qualifying young people age 16 -17 years and 18 years and above where the Social Work Service has continuing support commitments assisting young people towards independence.

99 **Policy: Supported Lodgings**

Details supported lodgings provision for young people age 16 years and over

100 **Policy: ‘Rent a Room’**

Details supported living provision for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People

APPENDIX April 2018 – end March 2019

Allowances - Weekly Amounts:

Child Age: Amount:

0-4 yrs	£142.86
5-10 yrs	£162.73
11-15 yrs	£202.58
16yrs+	£246.44

Supported Lodgings & 'Rent a Room' providers:	£188.54
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Payment for Skills (PFS) Fee structure and weekly fee amounts:

PFS Level	1 st Placement	2 nd Placement	Subsequent Placements
1	n/a	n/a	n/a
2	£122.41	£122.41	£61.21
3	£173.42	£173.42	£86.71
4	£224.42	£224.42	£112.21