

**WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CHILDRENS SAFEGUARDING**

# **FOSTER CARE FINANCE HANDBOOK**

April 2015

*Working for  
Warwickshire*



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Foster Care Finance Handbook is to ensure that all foster carers and social care staff are familiar with the fees and allowances to be paid in respect of children placed with Warwickshire County council approved foster carers.

**Section 1** of the handbook provides information on allowances that are paid to foster carers to provide day to day care for children and young people in care and how these should be administered, including advice on keeping financial records.

The various allowances are categorized to assist foster carers and staff in accessing information speedily.

The handbook also outlines information with regards to insurance and fostering equipment issues.

Allowances, paid to all approved Warwickshire foster carers, are based on Fostering Networks minimum recommended levels to meet the costs of caring for a child.

At the beginning of each financial year all foster carers will receive a breakdown of the fostering allowance they will be paid to meet the costs of caring for a Looked After child.

Fostering allowances are paid to carers to cover the following:

- maintenance
- clothing/personal allowances
- holidays
- birthdays
- festivals

These allowances are paid according to the following age groups.

0-4, 5-10, 11-15, and 16+

**Section 2** focuses on Payments for Skills and the professional development of foster carers..

The Payment for Skills scheme is a nationally approved scheme that recognises a professional fostering service. It has been developed to meet the needs of foster carers who are undertaking increasingly complex and demanding tasks in their fostering role.

It aims to promote the development of skills by ensuring that training and support underpin its structure and to reward skills by the provision of fee payments for those carers who wish to make use of it and who are able to evidence the delivery of good outcomes for children in care.

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## **1. HOW THE WEEKLY ALLOWANCES SHOULD BE USED**

### **1.1 Maintenance**

This payment is to contribute to food, light, heating, transport, general living costs and wear and tear on everyday household items e.g. bedding and decoration for child's bedroom.

### **1.2 Education Transport**

**ARRANGEMENTS ARE CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW (June 2017)**

### **1.3 School Meals**

Where Foster Carers are in receipt of benefit they can apply for free school meals for any child (including Looked After children) in their care.

### **1.4 Combined Allowance**

- a) This payment is to meet the costs of:
  - the clothing needs of children placed including day/night wear, school items and associated sportswear, and an appropriate bag/case to transport clothing and items where necessary.
  - enhancing children's personal care and development.
- b) The allowance is to be used in such a way as to promote self-development, subject to age, ability, and maturity. This would include: paying for leisure activities or specific interests; developing skills of saving and budgeting; and increasing a child's responsibility and understanding of their choices.
- c) Costs resulting from personal care needs associated with a child's difference in culture, religion, disability, gender or sexuality should not be taken from combined personal allowances but should be met from the basic maintenance payment. This is to ensure that all Looked After children regardless of diversity needs have equal opportunities to pursue leisure interests or to save.
- d) In the identification and provision of clothing and associated equipment for children in foster care, the parent(s) and the child wherever possible should be consulted and involved unless otherwise indicated by the Placement Plan
- e) Unless otherwise indicated by a Placement Plan children need to understand that the combined allowance is for a foster carer to administer subject to need and that carers are required to account for the spending of allowances. Only the pocket money element can be used by children as they please.
- f) How this money is to be managed should be clearly stipulated and recorded in the child's Individual Placement Plan. Where it is agreed that it is appropriate for a young person to manage some of the combined allowance this must never exceed more than 50% of the total combined allowance.

The clothing and Personal Allowance should be considered together and administered to meet the child's needs. This could include, although this is not an exhaustive list:

- mobile phones (pay as you go);
  - photographs;
  - clothes including school uniform;
  - spectacles;
  - nappies;
  - clubs;
  - toys; educational toys and equipment including sports equipment
  - school equipment/bags etc;
  - school trips and other family trips;
  - activities/hobbies/interests
  - cinema trips;
  - pocket money;
  - subscriptions for magazines;
  - contribution towards internet and computer paper and ink costs;
  - personal items of choice e.g. expensive hair styling;
  - purchase of birthday and other celebratory presents for birth family and foster family as appropriate;
  - additional holidays planned by the foster carer;
  - top up holiday costs;
  - top up transport costs as agreed with the child's social worker;
  - costs associated with a child's move to a new placement e.g. suitcase, holdall;
  - passports.
- g) Where combined clothing and personal allowance held by the carer has accrues to over £500 then the excess over and above this amount should be returned to the child's social worker as a cheque made payable to Warwickshire County Council. The point at which this should be done should be discussed with the Fostering Social Worker and paid back as advised.

## **1.5 Pocket Money/Personal spending**

Pocket money should be paid in line with the allowances table (see Appendix B). Arrangements for administering this should be discussed by the foster carer, social worker and child where they are of an appropriate age or ability.

## **1.6 Long Term Savings**

- Long term savings are deducted from the personal Allowances at source.
- Long term savings will only be required for children aged over 5 years who have been Looked After for a continuous period of 12 months.
- In the case of children aged 5 or over who have been continuously Looked After for 12 months or more accumulated long term savings will be transferred in January and July of each year into a Junior ISA or Child Trust Fund set up for the individual child concerned.
- Where a foster carer is caring for a child aged 5 or more who has not been continuously Looked After for 12 months, the carer will receive the 10% (which is not deducted as long term savings) this will show on their payslip as the 'Initial Placement Allowance'.

**IMPORTANT** The Initial Placement Allowance is paid for children aged 5 years or more for the first 365 consecutive days of a child being Looked After i.e. the criteria for payment is based on the length of time the child has been Looked After irrespective of where they are placed and is to be used as part of the combined personal allowance.

For young people aged 16 years who meet the 12 month requirement the 10% savings element will be paid into a z account so that it can be used in support of preparing a young person for independence. The use of this money should be incorporated into Pathway Planning and take account of the young person's views.

## **1.7 Holiday Allowance**

- a) This allowance is paid in accordance with the age groupings identified by Fostering Network.
- b) For any children already in placement this will be paid in June. Foster carers can request an early payment within the same financial year which will need to be authorised by the Children's Team Operations Manager.

- c) The holiday allowance will only be paid once per year for a child. If a child moves from one carer to another, then if the allowance is unspent or partly spent it should move to the next carer. This should be managed by the foster carer (where the placement is ending) making a cheque payable to Warwickshire County Council for any balance and giving this to the child's social worker. The monies will be paid back in to Warwickshire County Council and then paid back out to the foster carer for the ongoing placement.
- d) Foster carers existing holiday commitments should be discussed prior to placement and at the placement agreement meeting. Children should be included wherever possible.
- e) In the event of a placement ending before the holiday and where a deposit has been made, consideration will be given to reimbursements of payments made if appropriate.
- f) Where the holiday allowance is not being spent on a family holiday away from the foster home, the money should be set aside for other holiday periods, including school half-term breaks and other festivals.
- g) Foster Carers should avoid booking holidays during term time as the children and young people should not be out of school.
- h) Where a young person wants to use their holiday allowance to take a holiday, separate from that organised by the foster family, this should be discussed with their social worker who should be mindful that if this money is used for a separate holiday to the carer then the foster carer may not be in a position to include a young person in their family holiday.

## **1.8 Birthday allowance**

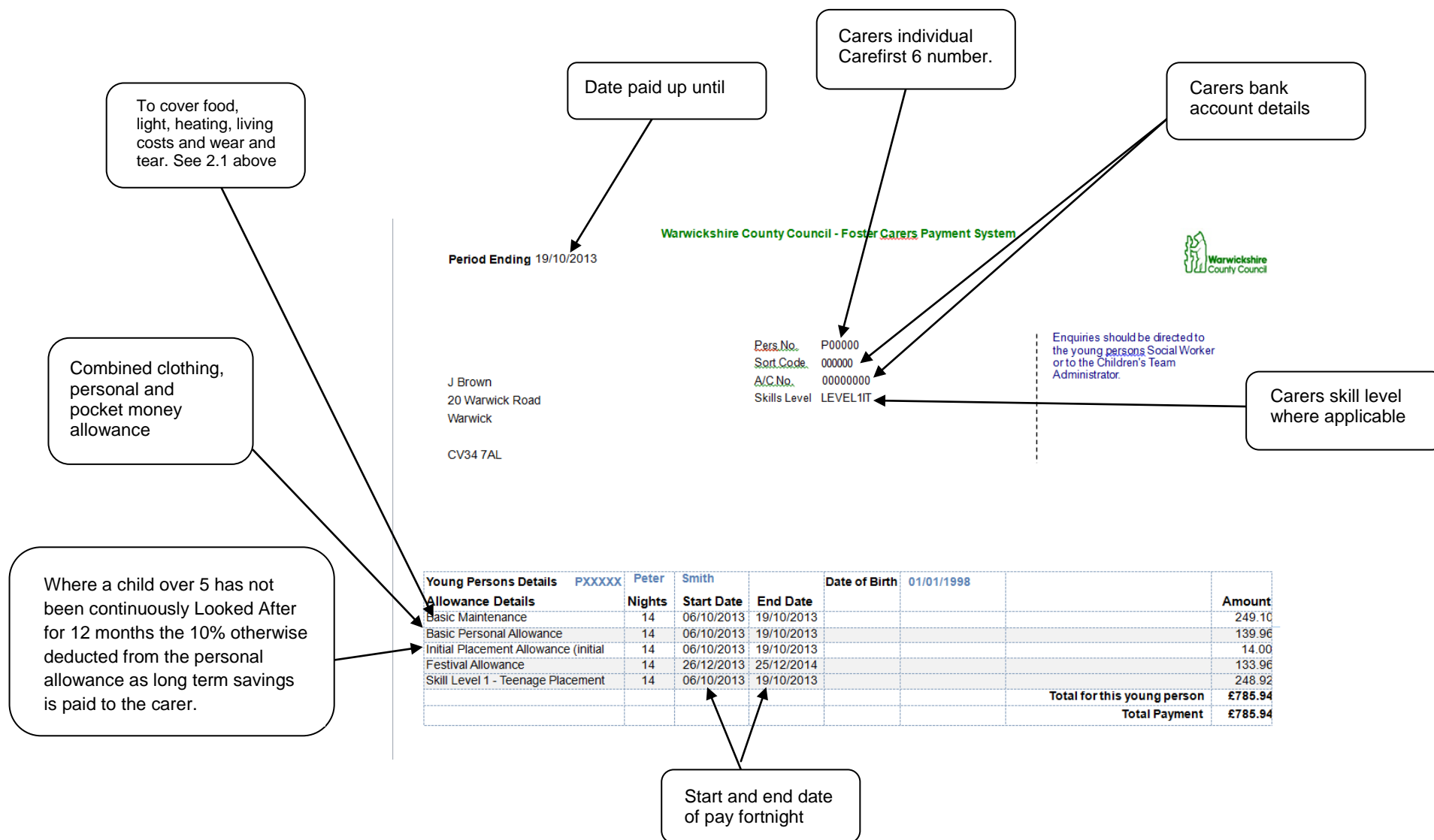
- a) Birthday allowances are paid for children who are in placement on their birthday and are included in the payment period prior to their birthday.
- b) For the allowance payable refer to the current Fostering Allowances table.
- c) The allowance is to be utilised for one or more of the following:
  - Gift;
  - Activity;
  - Party/celebration.
- d) Children should be actively involved in the decision-making where appropriate, subject to age, ability and maturity.
- e) Birthday allowances are expected to be spent in addition to any gifts, including money and other celebrations organised by a child's birth/adoptive family.

## **1.9 Festival allowance**

- a) The festival allowance is paid to enable foster carers to ensure that the religious beliefs and cultural heritage of children who are Looked After are promoted and supported.
- b) For any children already in placement this will be paid in October. Foster carers can request an early payment within the same financial year which will need to be authorised by the Children's Team Operations Manager.
- c) Where children move between placements or return home, any gifts purchased from this allowance will move with them.
- d) The allowance can be used flexibly to cover more than one festival



## 1.10 Payslip explained



Weekly Allowances are paid in arrears on alternative Tuesdays for the fortnight ending the previous Saturday e.g., fortnight ending Saturday 1st June 2013, paid Tuesday 4th June 2013

Foster carers are responsible for immediately notifying the Department when a child moves out or moves in. This is to prevent overpayment of allowances. Foster Carers should contact Admin on 02476 754160.

## **2. ADDITIONAL COSTS**

### **2.1 Passports**

The cost of the passport would normally be met from the combined personal allowances. In exceptional circumstances where a child has been recently placed with carers who are due to go on holiday and there are no accrued allowances the Children's Team may pay.

The passport should be kept safe and will be regarded as the personal property of the child.

### **2.2 Birth Certificates**

Every effort should be made to secure a child's birth certificate either when they are initially accommodated or as soon after as possible. If this is not possible then the cost of securing a new copy is to be met by the relevant Children's Team. The original copy should always be kept on the child's file and if given to a foster carer for a specific purpose returned to the child's social worker once the foster carer no longer requires it.

### **2.3 Child Care/Nursery Costs**

**2.3.1** For children aged 3-4 and attending a Warwickshire County Council nursery they are entitled to 15 hours free pre-school provision. Whenever possible carers should use a Warwickshire County Council nursery where a place is available. In the event that carers live outside of the county they should apply to their relevant local authority to obtain the same entitlement.

**2.3.2** Since September 2013 the entitlement of 15 hours free pre-school provision has been extended to 2 year olds where:

- a) the child is in local authority care (including foster care); or
- b) where the foster carer is in receipt of benefit (currently not including those on Working Tax Credit).

This is to be further extended in September 2014 to include:

- c) Those Working Tax Credit claimants who earn no more than £16,190 per annum; or anyone who has a current SEN/education, health & care plan; or any child who gets DLA;

**2.3.3** Foster carers will be responsible for the first £50 per week of any child care costs unless:-

It has been assessed, agreed and confirmed in the placement plan that the child should attend pre-school provision to promote their development, skills and learning over and above what would normally be provided within the foster home in terms of providing stimulation, play and social opportunities for the child

**or**

In exceptional circumstances where a carer:-

- has other regular paid employment **and**
- takes a pre-school child outside of their usual approval category in an emergency **or**
- when there is no other placement available **or**
- to enable a sibling group to remain together.

the Children's Team may contribute to childcare costs but this must be agreed in the Placement Plan.

### **3. OTHER CHILD RELATED PAYMENTS**

#### **3.1 Fostering equipment**

Warwickshire County Council Fostering Services will look to provide carers with any equipment that is essential to them undertaking the care of young people effectively and safely.

Items as listed below would fall into this category:

- bed and bedding;
- car seat or booster seat;
- smoke alarms;
- stair gate;
- buggy;
- cot and mattress; (A new cot mattress should be provided for each new placement in line with current medical advice)
- clothing storage space, e.g. wardrobe and drawers;
- mattress protectors;
- carbon monoxide detectors;
- aids for children with disabilities for Family Link Carers who cannot have this supplied by Health or Occupational Health;
- steriliser and other such essential items needed for the placement of a baby.

## **3.2 Foster carers insurance**

### **3.2.1 With regard to damage to property-**

#### **INSURANCE CLAIMS - YOUR FOSTERING SOCIAL WORKER MUST BE INFORMED OF ANY CLAIM FOR LOSS OR DAMAGE WITHIN 21 DAYS**

- a) All Warwickshire foster carers must receive a copy of Warwickshire County Council's, Guidance and Procedure with regards to Foster Carer Insurance.
- b) Foster carers are responsible for informing their own insurers (for both home and car) that they are fostering.
- c) Foster carers need to understand that claims will need to be assessed as reasonable for reimbursement. Fostering involves a certain amount of day to day "wear and tear" in the same way that it might for a foster carer's own children, additionally accidents can happen. Before making a claim foster carers should discuss this with their Fostering Social Worker.

### **3.2.2 With regard to insurance for legal advice or representation foster carers are responsible for their own and it is strongly recommended that they ensure this is in place. Cover is available through:-**

- Fostering Network
- Foster Talk
- Home insurance

## **4. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE MOVING ON**

### **4.1 Moving to another foster home**

At the end of a placement a cheque made payable to Warwickshire County Council for any unspent and accrued combined allowance must be returned to the Child's Social Worker. This money will be paid back in to the Department and then paid back out to the foster carer providing the ongoing placement. A receipt should be signed by both carer and social worker acknowledging what has been collected. One copy to stay with the carer and one copy for the child's file.

### **4.2 Moving on to independence/leaving care including university**

- a) For young people aged 16-18 years it may be appropriate to use some savings to purchase items and equipment for independent living accommodation. This must be discussed and agreed in the Pathway Plan.
- b) As part of planning, the future management of a child's savings must be discussed and the outcome recorded.

## **5. ALLOWANCES FOR RESPITE PLACEMENTS AND OTHER OCCASIONAL OVERNIGHT STAYS AWAY FROM THE FOSTER HOME**

Respite care for Looked After children should be child focused. Where it is deemed necessary to support and maintain the stability of a specific placement details should be included in the child's Placement Plan.

### **5.1 Child going from one Warwickshire approved foster carer to another**

- a) Where respite arrangements are agreed, respite carers would be paid their full Skill Level fee and also the basic maintenance allowance, less the combined (clothing and personal) allowance, pro-rata for the number of days a child is placed with them.
- b) The foster carer who is having the respite will cease to receive their skill fee but will continue to receive full clothing and personal allowance. The basic maintenance allowance will be reduced pro rata for the period whilst the child is away.
- c) Children/young people going for respite should be allowed to take some basic personal allowance (including the pocket money element) with them when going from their foster carer to a respite carer especially where the respite carer intends to take the child on a significant outing or activity.

### **5.2 Short periods away from the foster home:**

- a) Foster carers will continue to receive full fostering allowances when children and young people have occasional overnight stays with friends or family members.
- b) In some circumstances following agreement and discussion with the child's social worker it may be reasonable and/or appropriate for parents to be given money from the combined personal allowance to buy clothing items that the child requires. In these circumstances there should be agreement about what is a reasonable amount to be spent and the parent should provide a receipt to the carer when the child returns. Children should also be allowed to take with them some of the combined personal allowance for pocket money or activities.

### **5.3 PLACEMENT RETAINED FOR A SPECIFIC CHILD (*Including Kinship Carers*)**

There will be occasions when the child is staying elsewhere and it is appropriate for the foster carer to continue receiving the full allowance and full skill fee as the placement is to remain open for a specifically named child at the request of Children's Services. These would include:

- a) Child missing from placement (absconded) allowance and fees are payable for the first 7 days and then are subject to an Operations Manager's discretion.

- b) Child having significant periods with their family as part of a rehabilitation plan. The period of time for this would have to be incorporated into Placement Planning and be agreed by an Operations Manager. Again this arrangement would be expected to be time limited.
- c) Child has returned home but it has been agreed to hold the placement open to be confident that the rehabilitation plan is likely to work and the child is not likely to return to foster care in the short term. In this case allowances and full skill level fee would normally be paid for no longer than two weeks.

In any of the above circumstances the child's room/bed is not to be used for any other Looked After children whilst the child is away from the placement.

## **6. PARENT AND CHILD PLACEMENTS (procedures for these placements are to be reviewed shortly)**

### **6.1 When parent and child are Looked After**

The foster carer will receive the fostering allowances and skills level fee in respect of both the parent and their child.

### **6.2 Where child only Looked After – Parent 16+**

- a) The foster carer will receive the fostering allowance and skills level payment in respect of the child.
- b) Where the parent is over 18 yrs but previously Looked After by the same carer Staying Put procedures apply.
- c) Where the parent is over 18 yrs but not previously Looked After by the same carer:
  - A total of £180 will be paid.
  - Where the parent is eligible to claim housing benefit and/or income support or is working they will make the same contribution as is required under Staying Put procedures.
  - Any balance of the £180 total payment not met by Housing Benefit or the parent will be met by the Children's Team responsible for the child placed.

### **6.3 Where mother only is Looked After**

**(The child is in the same placement but is not Looked After)**

- a) The foster carer will receive the fostering allowance and skills level fee in respect of the parent
- b) In respect of the child the foster carer will receive:
  - 50% of their fee from section 17; paid for by the relevant Children's Team.
  - the full fostering allowances minus any benefits that the parent will receive in respect of their child.

In these circumstances the parent is responsible for the care and welfare of their child with the foster carer's role to support and advise. The placement should be underpinned by a clear placement plan that details financial arrangements and responsibilities in terms of purchasing items for the child and how the allowances/benefits will be managed between the parent and foster carer.

Where a parent returns to school she/he should be supported in claiming the 'Care to Learn' allowance. This can only be paid to the foster carer if s/he is a registered child minder and the amount will be deducted from any fostering allowances received.

## **7. CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN RECEIPT OF DISABILITY LIVING ALLOWANCE**

### **7.1 Disability Living Allowance**

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is a benefit that has a mobility and a care component. These are considered separate components but DLA is a single benefit and only one application is made.

- a) Children and young people under the age of 16 cannot claim DLA for themselves. Instead an adult 'appointee' must make the claim for the child.
- b) Foster carers are the appropriate people to claim DLA for a child under the age of 16 years old who is living with them.
- c) Any fostering allowances received will not affect the claim for the child because children who are 'Looked After' can receive DLA if they are living in a private household. However DLA should not be used for any items of expenditure that would normally be met from the fostering allowance. It can be used however to purchase items over and above what would be normally required for a Looked After child who does not have a disability e.g. incontinence pads for an older child; the child's disability means that they are wearing out clothes and shoes over and above what would be considered normal wear and tear etc..
- d) If the child receives the care component at the middle or higher rate foster carers may also be able to claim Carer's Allowance in their own right.
- e) Once a Looked After child reaches the age of 16, they may qualify for the lower rate of the care component if they cannot undertake activities required in order to plan or prepare a cooked meal (unaided) given all the ingredients.

### **7.2 Appropriate examples of expenditure, which must be to meet the additional costs designed around the child's disability**

- a) Purchase of specific equipment or to meet additional costs to promote and enhance a child's social, leisure and educational development e.g. additional

clothing required to support a child in pursuing an interest or activity, expenses associated in accompanying a child to an event or occasion (theatre, cinema).

- b) Additional costs for activity holiday specifically designed around the child's disability.
- c) Specialist play or sensory equipment, (tricycle, lighting) adapted equipment e.g.: ICT. Therapeutic treatments, massages, aromatherapy etc. Alternative creative outlets, horse riding, play schemes, clubs, and sports.
- d) Additional costs involved to enable a child to celebrate special occasions, religious or otherwise.
- e) Paying for sitting service for a child who requires a level of supervision more than that normally given to a child of the same age.
- f) Additional/exceptional household costs incurred to promote the child's health and well-being e.g. heating, additional use of washing machine.

### **7.3 Mobility component**

- a) The mobility component of the DLA will not be taken into account when calculating fostering allowances for the child.
- b) Appropriate examples of expenditure, which must be intended to meet additional costs, designed around the child's disability.
  - Use of taxis, volunteer drivers etc. to enable a child to attend appointments and leisure activities where children or young people are prevented from traveling on public transport due to access issues.
  - Additional travel costs for carers to accompany a child to an event or activity if it is not appropriate for the child to travel unaccompanied due to their level of disability.
  - To attend frequent hospital appointments.
  - Specially fitted car seats beyond those required to meet legislation on car safety seats.

### **7.4 Management of payments**

- a) Under no circumstances should fostering allowances be reduced if a child receives DLA.
- b) Whilst foster carers are not required to keep an account of how the DLA is spent it is recommended that they do so as fostering social workers and the child's social worker will want to monitor and ensure DLA funding is being used appropriately. Foster carers should therefore discuss how the money is to be spent as part of the professional working relationship and where age and developmentally appropriate the child should be involved in the discussion about how DLA can be used.



## **8 MANAGEMENT OF ALLOWANCES**

### **8.1 Receipts**

All receipts are to be retained and it is advised that each receipt is given a number, which is logged on to the appropriate recording sheet next to the item and on the back of the receipt. This will make a receipt easier to find when it is requested by a social worker.

### **8.2 Record sheets and making accounts available for inspection**

- a) These are to be completed with regard to income and expenditure related to Holiday Allowance, Festival Allowance and the combined clothing and personal allowance. An example sheet is attached at Appendix A.
- b) Wherever possible children should be encouraged to sign the expenditure sheet with the foster carer.

This will help the carer to:

- demonstrate what the money has been used for and thereby reduce any risk of complaint.
  - ensure that the young person is aware of financial management and the importance of financial planning and budgetary planning.
  - facilitate budgetary skills, particularly with older young people.
  - evidence expenditure for the fostering social worker and the child's social worker who will monitor and 'sign off' allowance forms in supervision and statutory visits.
- c) Any changes to any agreements should be recorded and placed on the child and foster carers file.
  - d) Foster Carers can purchase any single item up to the value of £100 before requiring social worker approval.

A record of respite arrangements should be recorded on the carers file to ensure that entitlements are received and correct payments are made.

### **8.3 Management of over payments**

**Whilst the Department endeavours to ensure that pay to carers is accurate unfortunately errors do occur. As a carer you are responsible for checking your payslip. If there is an overpayment you must contact Admin on 02476 754160 immediately.**

Where overpayments are identified they are recovered from the carer according to the following rules:-

- a) If the overpayment is 100% or less than the total payment to the carer for that fortnight then it is automatically deducted from that fortnight's payment.
- b) If the overpayment is more than 100% of the total payment to the Carer for that fortnight then Finance will notify Fostering Team Leaders/Operations Managers by e-mail of the overpayment. If no response is received from the team within 24 hours an invoice will be raised. A copy of the invoice and supporting documentation will be sent to the team for information.
- c) If there is no payment to the carer within the fortnight then an invoice for the overpayment will be raised to the carer. This will happen once the steps as outlined in section b) have been actioned

**CHILD/YOUNG PERSON'S ALLOWANCE RECORD OF EXPENDITURE**

Name of Carer     Mrs Hope

Fortnightly Personal & clothing allowance: £95.68

Name of Child Sarah                      D.O.B            25.12 .11                      AGE            8

Date Payment Received	Amount Received	Receipt No.	Item bought or expenditure	Cost	Balance Amount Unspent	Signature Child Young Person (subject to age and ability) or CSW or FSW
20.12.13	£95.68	0	Pocket money for two weeks	£7.76	£87.92	
		1	Socks and T shirt	£15	£72.92	
		2	Hair cut	£7.50	£65.42	
		3	School trip	£20	£45.42	
		4	Top up for mobile	£15	£30.42	
3.1.14	£95.68				£126.10	
		0	Pocket Money for two weeks	£7.76	£118.34	

<b><u>FOSTERING ALLOWANCES</u></b> <b><u>with effect from 1st April 2015</u></b> <b><u>0 - 12 Months of Placement (Initial placement allowance)</u></b>				
WEEKLY ALLOWANCE - 0 - 12 months of Placement (Settling-in)				
	AGE BANDS			
	0-4	5-10	11-15	16+
Basic	106.12	107.38	129.70	138.83
Clothing	27.60	40.38	50.33	63.65
Personal	9.14	14.97	22.55	43.96
Personal Allowance (incl clothing)	36.74	55.35	72.88	107.61
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>142.86</b>	<b>162.73</b>	<b>202.58</b>	<b>246.44</b>
POCKET MONEY & LONG TERM SAVINGS (within Personal allowance)				
	AGE BANDS			
	0-4	5-10	11-15	16+
Pocket Money (30%)	2.74	4.49	6.77	13.19
SKILLS FEE				
	AGE BANDS			
	0-4	5-10	11-15	16+
Level 1	124.46	124.46	124.46	124.46
Level 2	204.96	204.96	204.96	204.96
Level 3	279.47	279.47	279.47	279.47
OTHER ALLOWANCES				
	AGE BANDS			
	0-4	5-10	11-15	16+
Birthday	91.36	92.42	111.66	130.37
Festival	114.18	115.55	139.51	151.35
Holiday	274.07	277.26	334.93	374.74

## **FOSTERING ALLOWANCES**

**with effect from 1st April 2015**

**12 Months PLUS of Placement**

WEEKLY ALLOWANCE - 12 months plus Placement				
	AGE BANDS			
	0-4	5-10	11-15	16+
Basic	106.12	107.38	129.70	138.83
Clothing	27.60	36.34	45.29	57.29
Personal	9.14	13.47	20.30	39.56
Personal Allowance (incl. clothing)	36.74	49.81	65.59	96.85
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>142.86</b>	<b>157.19</b>	<b>195.29</b>	<b>235.68</b>
POCKET MONEY & LONG TERM SAVINGS (within Personal allowance)				
	AGE BANDS			
	0-4	5-10	11-15	16+
Pocket Money (30%)	2.74	4.49	6.77	13.19
LT Savings (10%)	0.00	5.54	7.29	10.76
SKILLS FEE				
	AGE BANDS			
	0-4	5-10	11-15	16+
Level 1	124.46	124.46	124.46	124.46
Level 2	204.96	204.96	204.96	204.96
Level 3	279.47	279.47	279.47	279.47
OTHER ALLOWANCES				
	AGE BANDS			
	0-4	5-10	11-15	16+
Birthday	91.36	92.42	111.66	130.37
Festival	114.18	115.55	139.51	151.35
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# **Warwickshire County Council**

## **Fostering services**

### **Skill Level Payment Scheme**

**February 2014**

# **FOSTER CARER PAYMENTS FOR SKILLS SCHEME**

## **1. BACKGROUND**

1.1 Warwickshire County Council initially introduced a skills-based, career progression scheme for foster carers on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2002 since which time there has been significant changes in relation to Regulations, Standards and Guidance with respect to Fostering Services nationally.

1.2 The scheme was reviewed in 2012 and takes account of the following regulations and standards:

- UK National Standards for Foster Care 1999
- Code of Practice on the recruitment, assessment, approval, training, management and support of foster carers 1999
- Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2011

1.3 This revised scheme also incorporates the following key principles identified by Regulations, Standards and Guidance and OFSTED requirements:

With regard to rewards payments:

- a) Foster carers are clear about the fostering service's payment structures and the payments due to them including clarity on payment of allowances and any fee during a break in placement or should the fostering household be subject to an allegation.
- b) Reward payments are linked with foster carer's skills and abilities to meet the needs of children who are fostered and with their commitment to training and skills and development

With regard to training and development:

- a) A clear framework of training and development is in place and this is used as the basis for assessing foster carers' performance and identifying their training and development needs.
- b) The foster carer must be able to evidence the Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards for Foster Care (previously CWDCs), within the timescales specified in Fostering Services National Minimum Standards.
- c) The content of foster care training should be linked to the appropriate QCF (previously NVQ competencies).
- d) Child Protection Training and First Aid Training must be completed within the first twelve months of approval.
- e) Foster carers' personal development plans set out how they will be supported to undertake on-going training and development that is appropriate to their development needs and experience.
- f) Annual reviews should confirm what progress has been made on the previous year's training and development objectives, and identify areas for further development of skills. Annual reviews should be used to ensure that adequate training continues to be provided and is taken up.

## **2. THE SCHEME GENERALLY**

- 2.1 It is designed to recognise and reward foster carer's(s) skills, experience, time and the commitment involved; in caring for, and meeting the need of a number and range of children and young people placed in their care; in working in partnership with parents and extended family; and in maintaining their personal development through participating in training.
- 2.2 It ensures that payment arrangements are linked to skills, competencies and commitment to training and personal development and not the perceived difficulties of a young person.
- 2.3 By providing a range of training opportunities and learning materials including support groups, evening, day courses and weekend courses, and Distance Learning packs for Core Training Stage 1 it ensures that all Warwickshire foster carers are able to further their development.
- 2.4 Distance Learning should not replace attending training (as there is a value in learning as a group and sharing experience) but it is acknowledged that where carers are not local to Warwickshire or where the secondary carer is employed full time attending training can be more difficult. Distance Learning will ensure these carers at least complete Core Stage 1 training in the first year or two of fostering.
- 2.5 Any persons applying to be foster carers for Warwickshire, who have prior experience as a foster carer, may be considered for the Payments for Skills Scheme at the same time as their fostering approval. Entry to the Payments for Skills scheme is subject to foster care approval and the applicant(s) being able to evidence that they meet the appropriate skills level criteria.
- 2.6 Skills fee payments are reviewed annually.

## **3. SKILLS LEVEL 1 ENTRY CRITERIA**

### **Short-Term, Respite, Long-Term, and Permanency**

- 3.1 **Eligibility** Entry to Skills Level 1 will depend on the foster carer(s) meeting the following criteria:
- 3.2 **Approval**
  - a) person(s) is/are approved foster carer for Warwickshire County Council;
  - b) person(s) has/have completed 'Focus on Fostering' preparation training;( kinship foster carers may not have been offered this training)
  - c) Both carers have completed their TSD (CWDC) Standards. Fostering couples may evidence the Standards in one workbook.



### 3.3 Training

- a) Primary foster carer must have completed three 'Core' training courses within 12 months including Child Protection Stage 1 and First Aid.
- b) Second carer (where applicable) must have attended Child Protection Stage 1
- c) Any training or actions identified at the time of approval/review – is currently being worked on, being progressed or completed. If a priority training need has been identified at approval this must also have been completed.

### 3.4 Completion of Training, Support and Development Standards (CWDC workbook)

This replaces the Skills Level 1 portfolios completed previously. CWDC Workbooks should be signed off by Fostering Social Workers and then sent on to the in house QCF (previously NVQ) Centre for checking and passing. This will ensure consistency across Warwickshire with regard to the standards expected.

Advice and Guidance will be available from Fostering Social Care Workers and Fostering Social Workers. TSD Standards should be part of a foster carer's supervision agenda until completion N.B. TSD Standards **must** be completed within the first twelve months of approval. However, foster carers need to take note that it is their responsibility to complete these standards.

- 3.5 **Availability:** The Fostering Practice Leader is satisfied that the foster carer has been available to foster.

## 4. SKILLS LEVEL 2 ENTRY CRITERIA

### Short-Term, Respite, Long-Term, and Permanency

- 4.1 Eligibility: Carers will need to have had sufficient fostering experience to be able to demonstrate skills and competency. There are two routes for attaining Skills Level 2 status to acknowledge that some carers may not want to take the academic approach to their development and learning. Entry to Skills Level 2 will depend on the foster carer(s) meeting the following criteria:

- 4.2 **Route 1 – Where the primary carer wants to take the QCF( a more academic) route**

#### **Approval:**

- a) Both foster carers have met the requirements of Skills Level 1;
- b) The primary carer taking the QCF route must undertake the following QCF units as part of their choices in the first twelve months of pursuing the QCF.

- 172 Understand the context of supporting children and young people through foster care

173 Practice as a Foster Carer

052 Engage in Personal Development in Health, Social Care or Children's and Young People's Settings

QCF units will be checked by QCF Assessors to ensure consistency of standards.

**Training:**

- a) The primary and secondary must complete at least two further Core training courses since attaining Skill Level 1.
- b) For carers whose matching preference is teenage placements both carers must complete the Managing Challenging Behaviours Training.
- c) Additionally where training has been identified in the Performance Review for either one or both carers the necessary training must have been completed

**Availability:** The Fostering Practice Leader is satisfied that the foster carer has been available to foster.

**4.3 Route 2 – Where the primary carer wants to complete WCC modular route**

This route will suit carers who are not currently interested in obtaining a vocational qualification, but still have the skills and experience to progress to Level 2

For these carers the expectations will be as follows:

**Approval:**

- a) Both foster carers have met the requirements of Skills Level 1;
- b) The primary carer will undertake the following WCC modules which are:

Module 1	Practice as a Foster Carer
Module 2	Personal Development
Module 3	Supporting Children and Young People through Foster Care

Warwickshire modules will be assessed by QCF Assessors within the Central Fostering Service, to ensure consistency of standards. This will also ensure that if carers choose to take up the QCF in the future the learning may be transferable

**Training:**

- a) The primary and secondary must complete at least two further 'Core' training courses since attaining Skills Level1.
- b) For carers whose matching preference is teenage placements both carers must complete the Managing Challenging Behaviours Positively.

- c) Additionally where training has been identified in the performance review for either one or both carers the training must have been completed.

**Availability:** The Fostering Practice Leader is satisfied that the foster carer has been available to foster.

## **5. TEENAGE PLACEMENTS**

- 5.1 Foster carers who are approved for teenage placements and who are not in the Skills Level Scheme, will be paid at Skills Level 1 during the time that the teenager is in placement provided that they have attended Caring for Teenagers Training and given an undertaking that they will attend Managing Challenging Behaviors Positively within 3 months of approval. If they have other children in placement they will only be paid Skills Level 1 for the teenager for the duration of that placement, and will receive usual payment for the other placements.
- 5.2 This also applies to respite placements for teenagers 13+, but the carer must be approved for teenagers and meet the criteria re training, as above.
- 5.3 Foster carers being paid on Skills Level 1 for teenage placements will still need to have completed the requirements for Skill Level 1 entry (i.e. CWDC workbook and training) to progress to Skills Level 2.

## **6. ONGOING DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING FOR ALL FOSTER CARERS**

- 6.1 **As a minimum** each fostering household must attend at least one days training in any 12 months period. This will be identified within supervision or the Annual Performance Review.
- 6.2 Additionally either or both carers must attend any training identified at their annual performance review where there are specific concerns about their skills, knowledge or practice

## **7 WITHDRAWAL OF SKILLS LEVEL FEE**

- 7.1 If the above criteria has not been met this may result in skill level payments being suspended until the relevant training is completed. The decision to suspend the Skill Level payment will be made by the Fostering Operations Manager.

## **8. KINSHIP FOSTER CARE**

- 8.1 This guidance only applies to kinship carers where the plan is for the children to remain in Local Authority care long term.
- 8.2 Kinship foster carers are eligible for the basic fostering allowance and will be offered fostering social work support and are eligible for training in accordance with their assessed needs.

- 8.3 Kinship foster carers are eligible to apply for Skill Level payments. Refer to section 3 for the skill level criteria. Kinship foster carers must have completed the CWDC workbook within 18 months.

## **9. Transitions Arrangements**

All foster carers sign the Foster Care Agreement, and by signing it agree to attend training identified as needed by your assessment or Annual Performance Review.

This new skill level route will be operational from November 1<sup>st</sup> for skill level 1 and January 2013 for skill level 2.

Carers who have started the portfolio route to either skill level 1 or 2 can continue this route.

The Local Authority as a fostering agency have now introduced higher expectations in respect of both carers attending training, carers who are currently on a skill level payment will be given 2 years to complete any outstanding training. After January 2015 any carers who have not completed the training identified may have their skill level payment suspended, until completion of the training.