

### Ex-Gratia Payments and Claims for Damage

All foster carers are expected to inform their insurers (household, building, car) that they are caring for foster children. Carers are also expected to take reasonable precautions to avoid risk of damage to, or loss of their personal property as a result of fostering. However, uninsured losses/damage caused by a foster child may be considered for reimbursement where the carers' own insurance does not cover the damage. All claims under this category will normally require 2 estimates and a report must be presented to the Assistant Director for a decision.

### Payments to Support Interests/Talents/Hobbies

Financial assistance to support interests/talents/hobbies, which exceed the cost of £10 per week, can be applied for by the supervising social worker. Approval can then be given to meet the excess cost of such activities. Payments of up to £10 per week are expected to be covered by fostering allowance or the flat rate per placement fee.

### Receipts of Gifts by Carers

Carers may occasionally be offered gifts, presents or other hospitality by birth family members or friends of the child they are caring for. All such gifts and hospitality should be viewed with caution, as acceptance may be misconstrued at a later stage. Prior to accepting any gifts or hospitality the carer must discuss the appropriateness of this with their supervising social worker and the child's social worker. Only if it is considered appropriate should a gifts and hospitality form be submitted to a Team Manager, Family Placement Services, who will make a recommendation to the Assistant Director, otherwise the gift must be refused or returned.

### Any Other Matters

Any questions arising should in the first place be dealt with by the relevant supervising social worker or Duty Office on 0300 555 2834.

Queries regarding payment details, should be made to Children's Services Finance Section on 01922 658323.



WALSALL COUNCIL.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

### FOSTERING ALLOWANCES INFORMATION FOR CARERS

With Effect From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016

| AGE   | TOTAL MAINTENANCE | Below is a guideline in respect of how the fostering allowance should be used in respect of the daily needs of children and young people: |
|-------|-------------------|---|
| 00-04 | £142.86           | Food 30% - 34%<br>Clothing 22% - 26%<br>Transport 7% - 11%<br>Personal 6% - 17%<br>Household 18% - 30%                                    |
| 05-10 | £162.73           |   |
| 11-15 | £202.58           |   |
| 16+   | £246.44           |   |

Please note that foster children do not qualify for free school meals.

Payments are made 4 weekly and in arrears. Fostering Allowances are payable for each night a child is in placement. You must check remittance advice notes and advise finance section urgently of over/under payment, as these must be rectified as soon as possible, and may cause disruption to your payments.

To ensure accuracy of payments foster carers should confirm placements and discharge of children with their supervising social worker (or duty officer).

The percentages for the various components of the fostering allowance differs due to the age bands of children and young people.

Whilst this provides a useful guide, it is not intended to be rigid. However, within the category of clothing, expenditure must be recorded in the child's log and verified in supervision. Pocket money must similarly be recorded and paid at the recommended rate in the policy. Sometimes it will be appropriate to withhold pocket money for a short period, which should be appropriate to the misdemeanour. This should usually be for a short period of time for example a few hours but up to a maximum of four days. It can also be appropriate to confiscate up to two thirds of a child's pocket money in a single weekly episode for reparation. This should all be clearly recorded in the child's logs and the child's social worker and your supervising social worker informed.

### Automatic Entitlements

Birthday – One half weeks allowance

Christmas/Festival – One weeks allowance per year

Holidays/Recreation – A maximum of two weeks allowance per year (April to March) can be paid in respect of the child. Foster carers must complete a Holiday/Recreation Allowance Form to claim this allowance, and submit this to their supervising social worker for approval. Payment will only be made more than one month in advance of holiday dates where it is necessary to secure bookings. You should discuss this with your supervising social worker.

Consideration will be given to requests for payments to enable children to go on holidays abroad with the family. Funding will occasionally be made available to increase a child's holiday/recreation allowance to cover any flight/travel costs, where these are higher than 2 weeks allowance, even where the holiday is for one week only if the holiday is deemed to be of significant benefit to a child or young person. Only actual costs can be considered and receipts or confirmation of payment details from travel agents must be submitted. Fostering allowances will continue to be paid and are expected to cover any other expenditure during holidays abroad.

Fostering allowances or the per placement fee are expected to cover school activities up to £30 per any one activity. In addition, one payment for a school educational trip per child can be paid for out of the Fostering budget for the primary school, and one for the secondary school period. Requests need to be made through the supervising social worker.

### **Discretionary Payments**

#### **Initial Clothing Grants**

An application may be made for an initial clothing grant, where a child has inadequate clothing on becoming Looked After and no clothes can be retrieved for him or her. The sum approved will depend on the needs of the child, but will not exceed £175. An application should normally be made within the first 6 weeks of a child's placement in foster care. Receipts or a record of clothes purchased are required.

#### **School Uniform Grants**

An equivalent system to the above will apply to school uniform grants. Only one grant will be made per child respectively for the infant school period, the junior school period and the secondary school period, unless the child moves placements, which also results in a change of school.

#### **Maternity Clothes for young people who are pregnant**

An equivalent system will also apply to maternity clothes where necessary and a payment not exceeding £100 per pregnancy may be approved.

#### **Transport Costs**

The fostering allowance or flat fee is assumed to cover all travel costs incurred by the child taking part in everyday family activities and to cover short car journeys both during the week and at weekends. Carers can **only** claim additional costs to assist in school transport, contact or health appointments, if the mileage is 4 miles return or more. This needs to be agreed with the supervising social worker beforehand.

Payments for children's bus passes are included in the weekly fostering allowance.

### **Young People Absent From Placement, incl. Admission to Hospital**

If a child is absent from placement, due to an unauthorised absence or admission to hospital, the fostering allowance will cease. Any exception to this must be agreed by a manager within Family Placements Services.

If a child receives a respite service in foster care, fostering allowances will transfer to the respite carer on the day the child leaves their regular foster carer and transfer back the day they return.

### **Equipment**

It is the responsibility of carers to provide appropriate furniture and other equipment for children and young people fostered, although an initial lump sum payment may be made at the approval stage, processed by the supervising social worker.

### **Child Care and Sessional Work Costs to Support Placements.**

A number of carers will be available at any one time to support other foster carers in order to aide placement stability. In exceptional circumstances, nursery, play scheme and sessional work costs can be agreed by a Team Manager, Family Placements, where it can be demonstrated that this measure will significantly enhance the placement stability, or where the need arises as a result of service requirements. Where such arrangements are made to meet the specific needs of a child, the responsible Team Manager(s) can fund this. Where appropriate, childcare arrangements are made in negotiation with the child's social worker to cover the normal work patterns of a carer. This must be funded directly by the foster carer, unless the carer does not receive a fee payment. In this case, financial support may be agreed by the relevant Team Manager(s). Foster carers cannot be paid as Childminders unless they are appropriately registered with the Early Years' Service to do so.