



**achieving
for children**

Independent Fostering Agency Fostering Fees and Allowances Policies 2020/21

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| Revisions | Updated allowance rates and additional guidance on alternative to residential payments. |
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Fostering Allowances

Overview

Foster carers receive an allowance to cover the cost of caring for a child. The Department for Education set guidelines on the rates of these payments every April.¹

Payments to Foster carers in Kingston and Richmond

Fostering allowances in Kingston and Richmond are set in line with DfE minimum weekly allowance guidelines for London Boroughs. They will change on 1 April of each year according to the rates set by the DfE for that financial year. The rates set by the DfE can be found at their website.

In the financial year 2020/21, foster carers in Kingston and Richmond will receive the following fostering allowances. **Child's savings will be deducted before payment of allowances to foster carers.**

| Age of child/years | Weekly payment direct to foster carer/£ per week per child | Daily rate direct to foster carer/£ per child | Child's savings (£ per week) | Total Weekly Allowance (including saving element)/£ |
|--------------------|--|---|------------------------------|---|
| 0-2 | 152.00 | 21.71 | 5.00 | 157.00 |
| 3-4 | 155.00 | 22.14 | 5.00 | 160.00 |
| 5-10 | 174.00 | 24.86 | 5.00 | 179.00 |
| 11-15 | 197.00 | 28.14 | 10.00 | 207.00 |
| 16-17 | 231.00 | 33.00 | 15.00 | 246.00 |

Payments to Foster carers in Windsor and Maidenhead

Fostering allowances in Windsor and Maidenhead will remain frozen until they are in line with the rates set by the DfE for the South East. Thereafter, allowances in Windsor and Maidenhead will change on 1 April of each year according to the rates set by the DfE for that financial year. The rates set by the DfE can be found at their website.

In the financial year 2020/21, foster carers in Windsor and Maidenhead will receive the following fostering allowances. **Child's savings will be deducted before payment of allowances to foster carers from 1 April 2020. We will discuss with carers if they wish AfC to hold savings for children in existing placements.**

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/foster-carers/help-with-the-cost-of-fostering>

| Age of child/years | Weekly payment direct to foster carer/£ per week per child | Daily rate direct to foster carer/£ per child | Child's savings (£ per week) | Total Weekly Allowance (including saving element)/£ |
|---------------------------|---|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| 0-2 | 147.00 | 21.00 | 5.00 | 152.00 |
| 3-4 | 150.00 | 21.43 | 5.00 | 155.00 |
| 5-10 | 166.00 | 23.71 | 5.00 | 171.00 |
| 11-15 | 189.00 | 27.00 | 10.00 | 199.00 |
| 16+ | 222.00 | 31.71 | 15.00 | 237.00 |

Fostering Reward Fees

Overview

As a foster carer at Achieving for Children, and with a child in placement, you'll receive a fostering reward fee in recognition of your valued role as a foster carer. These are paid to our approved foster carers according to the child's needs and the carer's skills and experience and includes:

- A banded reward fee based on your experience and skill level
- A supplementary fee, paid per child in placement if the child reaches a threshold level of additional need

Payments

For all new placements from 1 April 2019 and existing placements where foster carers benefit from the below rates compared with the rates in place prior 1 April 2019, the following reward fees will be paid. Individual arrangements for those foster carers who would have seen a decrease in their income have been agreed with those foster carers and the IFA Board.

| AfC carer level | Reward fee per week per child/£ | Further information |
|--|--|--|
| Level 1 | 195 | None |
| Level 2 | 260 | None |
| Level 3 | 290 | None |
| Supplementary fee - moderately complex | 50 | The weekly supplementary fee is in recognition of the demands that caring for children with more complex needs places on carers. |
| Supplementary fee - highly complex | 100 | |
| Alternative to residential fee | Decided on a case by case basis in exceptional cases and has to be signed off by Director of Social Care | |

Weekly and daily rates

| Level of payment | Weekly payment/£ per child | Daily rate/£ per child |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Level 1 | 195.00 | 27.86 |
| Level 2 | 260.00 | 37.14 |
| Level 3 (without complex child) | 290.00 | 41.43 |

| | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Level 3 (with complex child) | 340.00 - 390.00 | 48.57 - 55.71 |
|------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|

Determining the complexity of a child's needs

To determine the level of complexity of a child's needs (no complex needs, moderately complex needs, or highly complex needs), a standardised Foster Child Behavioural Assessment will be used. The assessment will initially be completed when the child comes into foster care by the child's social worker, the supervising social worker, and referrer. Following this, the process for reviewing assessments will be aligned with the existing children looked after review processes and take into account the views of the foster carer on their lived experience of caring for the child.

- For short term placements, the decision made about the payment at the six month meeting will remain for the rest of the placement except in exceptional cases. For long term placements, the decision made about the payment at the six-month meeting will be reviewed annually at a CLA review meeting.
- An exceptional meeting could be called if a child's behaviour has changed significantly between CLA reviews. A child's needs assessment would be completed by the child's social worker as well as the ones already completed by the foster carer on a regular basis. The meeting should be attended by the supervising social worker; the child's social worker; the foster carer; and a senior manager. If there is sufficient evidence, the supplementary fee could be awarded at this meeting.

Alternative to Residential Fee:

In exceptional cases where the child has a profound disability, has been stepped down from residential care or hospital or intensive fostering is seen as the only alternative to a residential placement, a higher supplementary fee can be paid. These decisions have to be signed off by the Responsible Individual in either branch and are determined on a case by case basis. They require the completion of both a complexity assessment and a short report which collates the views of the foster carer/s on their lived experience of caring for the child, the child/young person and key professionals involved with their care and support. Decisions around whether the threshold for "alternative to residential" are met should be taken within four to six weeks of the child being placed and where appropriate payments will then be backdated. Foster carers can ask that the Chair of the IFA Board review these decisions at intervals of three months if they feel that the child's needs and their level of support has escalated.

Holiday Allowance

Overview

All children in the care of foster carers at Achieving for Children are entitled to an annual holiday allowance of up to four times the weekly age-related allowance. This will be effective from April 2019 in Windsor and Maidenhead as well as Richmond and Kingston.

The holiday allowance is an allowance primarily for looked after children who are going on holiday with their foster carers. One week can be claimed at the end of every 3 months, and we pay pro rata until 18 or when the child leaves the placement. The allowance is calculated on the age of the child at the 1st April each year.

Review and monitoring

Review every 6 months by the Fostering Service.

Payments to Foster carers in Kingston and Richmond

| Age of child/years | Yearly Holiday Allowance (including child's savings)/£ per child |
|--------------------|--|
| 0-2 | 628 (4*157) |
| 3-4 | 640 (4*160) |
| 5-10 | 716 (4*179) |
| 11-15 | 828 (4*207) |
| 16-17 | 984 (4*246) |

Payments to Foster carers in Windsor and Maidenhead

| Age of child/years | Yearly Holiday Allowance (including child's savings)/£ per child |
|--------------------|--|
| 0-2 | 608 (4*152) |
| 3-4 | 620 (4*155) |
| 5-10 | 684 (4*171) |
| 11-15 | 796 (4*199) |
| 16+ | 948 (4*237) |

Paid Respite

Overview

These payments should be seen as a reward for the foster carer's ongoing commitment to provide stable and consistent care for the children. From 1 April 2020, all foster carers with children in short and long term placements at Achieving for Children will be entitled to ten days' paid respite, paid at the carer reward fee rate. The child's allowance would follow the child. Additional respite could be paid in exceptional cases if agreed by the Director of Social Care. We are still assessing our capacity to resource respite carers for foster carers who are not able to identify someone from their own support network but all carers will receive an additional ten days fee by the end of March 2021.

Paid respite is paid annual leave per year for foster carers. Respite care may be arranged. It is recognised that not all carers take this annual leave entitlement, preferring not to disrupt the child they have in placement. In these cases, the paid respite allowance can be paid in lieu of annual leave.

Review and monitoring

Review every 6 months by the Fostering Service.

Payments

| Level of payment | Daily rate/£ per child | Total paid respite allowance/£ at 10 days |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Level 1 | 27.86 | 278.57 |
| Level 2 | 37.14 | 371.43 |
| Level 3 | 41.43 | 414.29 |

Pocket Money and Savings

Overview

General arrangements must exist in all foster homes for the payment of pocket money and savings as well as the opportunity for young people to buy personal effects and clothing at appropriate times. The arrangements should be set out in the Foster Care Agreement or the Placement Information Record for individual children.

Principles

- The provision of pocket money is good because it helps children understand the value of money, what things cost and helps them develop budgeting skills necessary for the future. There is an expectation that within the fostering allowance an element of this should be used for pocket money for the child or young person. It is expected that children will be aware of the amount of money they will receive and when this will be paid.
- We have provided suggested minimum weekly amounts for pocket money but understand that circumstances within every home are different and we would want this to be compatible with foster carers' birth children within the home.
- The amount of pocket money should be agreed at the placement planning meeting with the child's social worker and your supervising social worker.
- Younger children should be supervised in how the money is spent but older children should be encouraged to be more independent.
- If there are concerns about how the money is spent these concerns should be discussed with the child and the social worker. If there is a serious risk, the arrangements for providing money may have to be restricted or supervised spending arrangements put in place. This should always be discussed and agreed with the child's social worker.
- Deductions from pocket money should not be made for fines or sanctions unless agreed with the child's social worker, except for reparation of malicious damage or to pay fines determined by a court. If a court imposes such deductions or fines, no more than two thirds of a child's pocket money should be deducted in any week.

Recommended weekly amounts for pocket money and savings

| Age (years) | Pocket Money (£/week) | Savings (held by AfC) (£/week) |
|-------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 0-2 | 3* | 5 |
| 3-4 | 5 | 5 |
| 5-10 | 6 | 5 |
| 11-15 | 8 | 10 |
| 16-18 | 10 | 15 |

*We do not expect babies to be given pocket money but you may choose to use to buy treats or simply add to the savings account.

These rates apply to Parent and Child placements but not for Short Break or relief care placements. These rates will be reviewed annually with the fostering allowances and updated information will be published in the fostering allowance booklet.

Bank or Savings Accounts

AfC will be holding weekly savings in trust for all looked after children until they turn 18 years old. All children and young people should be encouraged to open a personal savings account so that they can save some of their pocket money and money they receive for their birthdays or Christmas. Whilst children should have access to these accounts, foster carers need to support children to build on these savings. A bank or savings account should be set up and managed by foster carers. You will need proof of the child's identity (passport or birth certificate) and confirmation of the address. The child's social worker or your supervising social worker should be able to arrange these documents. A record of the amount saved and account details should be written up in the foster carer recording file. You should never place a foster child's savings in your own account.

From April 2020 each child will receive savings according to their age, as follows:

| Kingston and Richmond | | Windsor and Maidenhead | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Age of child/years | Child's savings (£ per week) | Age of child/years | Child's savings (£ per week) |
| 0-2 | 5.00 | 0-2 | 5.00 |
| 3-4 | 5.00 | 3-4 | 5.00 |
| 5-10 | 5.00 | 5-10 | 5.00 |
| 11-15 | 10.00 | 11-15 | 10.00 |
| 16-17 | 15.00 | 16-17 | 15.00 |

Supporting the service policy

Overview

This policy provides summary information for our foster carers and staff on the activities that constitute as a foster carer supporting the fostering service, and the process for claiming the sessional rate that foster carers and the fostering service should follow.

Payments

Supporting the department

Foster carers are entitled to a sessional rate of £11.23 per hour for supporting the fostering service.

The following activities constitute as supporting the fostering service in a manner that is not directly related to the care of a child:

- Contributing to training as a facilitator or speaker
- Speaking at events or in a professional forum
- Support for recruitment activities
- Any other activities agreed by the Branch Manager

Supporting other carers

We expect foster carers to offer informal mutual support to each other, this may involve caring for children placed with another foster care and vice versa. However, where the fostering service makes formal arrangements for one carer to support another the sessional rate will apply per child. This will not exceed the daily amount payable for the full time care of that child.

Review and monitoring

This policy will be reviewed a month before the end of each financial year by the Fostering Service.

Process for claiming the sessional rate

Foster carers who have supported the fostering service in one or more of the above activities should complete the Claim Form, which can be found in Annex 1 of this policy and in the Fostering Handbook.

Once the Claim Form has been completed, foster carers should return it to their supervising social worker.

The supervising social worker should then take the completed Claim Form to a manager within the fostering service for authorisation.

Once the claim has been authorised, the supervising social worker should scan and email the form to Finance. Finance should then process the payment.

Foster carers should expect to receive payment within 10 working days of Finance processing the claim.

All claims should be made within 6 weeks of the activity being conducted.

Further information

If you are a foster carer and require further information or advice regarding this policy, please ask your supervising social worker in the first instance.

Annex 1: Claim Form

Supporting the service (and supporting other foster carers for Level 3 carers only)

To be completed by the foster carer

| | | | |
|--|-----------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Your name | | | |
| Please list the activities that you are claiming for and the date that these were conducted. <i>Please refer to the fostering fees and allowance policy</i> | Activity | Date conducted | No. of hours |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Please provide any further details on the activities you are claiming for, if applicable. | | | |
| Total number of hours claimed at £11.23/hour | | | |
| Foster carer signature and date | | | |
| Supervising Social Worker comments | | | |
| Supervising Social Worker signature and date | | | |

To be completed by the Fostering Service

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Name of authorising manager | |
|-----------------------------|--|

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Claim authorised (Yes/No) | |
| Comments | |
| Signature and date | |

To be completed by Finance

| | |
|--|--|
| Name of Finance Officer dealing with claim | |
| Payment authorised (Yes/No) | |
| Comments | |
| Signature and date | |

| Date | Details of Journey | Mileage (@46.9p per mile) |
|-------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
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| | | |
| Grand Total | | |

Additional Payments

Overview

The following additional payments may be made if:

- The foster carer has provided all necessary receipts
- The supervising social worker has given prior agreement
- The supervising social worker has completed the payment
- The fostering manager has given agreement and authorised the claim

Review and monitoring

All of the following additional payments will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Fostering Service before the start of each financial year.

Introductory costs

Where a foster carer is involved in introductions either to a child or facilitating introducing a child to a future placement reasonable travelling expenses and overnight accommodation may be paid. This should be discussed as part of the introductions planning process.

Additional Travelling Expenses

As stated, it is an expectation that foster carers provide appropriate transport depending on the child's needs and some travelling costs are included in the fostering allowance. However, where a carer is undertaking significant travelling, over 150 miles a month (per child) the excess may be reimbursed. Claims must be submitted within three months of the date of travel and will be paid at the local authority mileage rate which currently stands at 46.9p per mile.

Where a foster carer is using public transport and the cost of this exceeds £70.35 a month, the excess may be reimbursed. (This figure is based on what 150 driven miles would cost if they were reimbursed at the mileage rate of 46.9p.)

Initial clothing allowances

Up to £200 is payable to foster carers to cover the cost of supplying basic essential items of clothing and footwear for children where these items are not available either from their home or previous placement. Requests for additional clothing allowance need to be discussed in advance with the carers' SSW and agreed by a fostering manager. If this child then moves from your care it is expected that they have adequate clothing to take with them.

As young people begin to take more responsibility, depending on their age and understanding, discussions should take place with the young person and their social worker about a personal allowance from the foster carer to allow them to purchase clothing, toiletries and other personal requisites independently.

Birthdays, Christmas or Other Significant Celebrations

Provision for special occasions is provided within the weekly fostering allowance. However, where a child or young person is placed within four weeks of a special occasion e.g. birthday a payment of up to £100 can be agreed by the Branch Manager. Where the child is placed within four weeks of the Christmas period or a significant religious festival a payment of up to one weeks additional allowance can be agreed by the Branch Manager to contribute towards these additional expenses.

Set up allowance (new to fostering)

This allowance may be claimed, to a maximum of £500, to cover the cost of acquiring basic equipment which the carer does not currently have in order to fulfil the fostering task. It is intended to cover the purchasing of items such as cots, beds, bedding, clothes storage, desk etc for a foster child's bedroom. It can also be used to purchase essential safety equipment such as first aid kit,, fire extinguisher, socket covers, high chairs, car seats, stair gates etc.

This allowance does not cover any decorating, curtain or carpet costs, foster carers are expected to keep their house in good repair and replace such items as necessary. Where the actions of a fostered child result in the damage of internal fixtures and fittings within the home it may be appropriate to make an insurance claim (see Insurance section in Fostering Handbook for full details of procedures around this).

This allowance may also be paid to foster carers taking on a new placement where specialist equipment is needed that they do not currently have for example, waterproof bedding, car seats, baby equipment, or mobility aids.

Medical, Dental, Optical Payments

Reasonable expenditure for exceptional medical, dental and optical treatment will be reimbursed where not received through the NHS. Approval for such treatment/s will be made by the Head of Fostering. Foster carers must receive agreement before treatment is sought.

School Clothing Allowance

Routine replacement and updating of school clothing for a child in your care is covered by the weekly allowance. Where a child is placed without any appropriate school clothing or changes school whilst in your care, the actual cost of the items purchased specifically for the new school will be reimbursed against receipts. This means those items which have the school badge or emblem on them, and cannot be bought from generic shops. Those which are common items such as plain white shirts, black trousers/skirt, general sports wear are not included. School equipment is also expected to be provided from the weekly allowance therefore items such as calculators, books, and school bags, unless specific school regulations regarding these are in place, will not be included. When a child moves school please discuss this with your social worker.

School Trips

School day trips or outings will be expected to be paid for from the fostering allowance. Where there is an opportunity for a child to attend an away trip with their school the department may decide to fund this if it is demonstrable that it will educationally benefit the young person and could therefore be considered under the pupil premium. The PEP is a forum where issues such as this could reasonably be raised and discussed.

Staying Put

Overview

In response to questions raised by IFA carers a review of our current Staying Put policy and payments will be completed by June 2020. Young people over the age of 18 can be offered staying put arrangements if both they and the carer agree. Staying put provides financial support to former foster carers for fostered young people until they reach the age of 21 unless the local authority considers that the staying put arrangement is not consistent with the welfare of the young person. The finance arrangements and approval for this placement must be discussed and sought at least three months prior to the young person's 18th birthday. It is the responsibility of the child's social worker to confirm the arrangements with the young person and the carer. (Please see Staying Put Policy).

Review and monitoring

Review every 3 months by the Fostering Service and Leaving Care Service.

Payments to Foster carers in Kingston and Richmond

Flat rate of £275 per week.

Where the young person who is staying put is able to apply for benefits, this should cover allowance costs. Where a young person has an EHCP or SEND support, an exceptional payment based on the needs of the young person could be agreed. This would be agreed in consultation with the leaving care team.

Payments to Foster carers in Windsor and Maidenhead

Flat rate of £250 per week.

Where the young person who is staying put is able to apply for benefits, this should cover allowance costs. Where a young person has an EHCP or SEND support, an exceptional payment based on the needs of the young person could be agreed. This would be agreed in consultation with frontline social work teams. The Staying Put Policy will be updated in the next three months.

Overpayments

If we overpay you, we will recover the money in the following payment due to you, or any future payments. If the child is no longer living with you at the time of the overpayment being picked up, you will need to pay back the money in full, or we can take the overpayment off your next placement, if it is within 3 months of you being notified of the overpayment. **It is your responsibility to inform us of any payments made to you, that you were not expecting.**

Payment during investigations of allegations

Overview

In response to the fees and allowances consultation, the IFA Board has agreed that foster carers will continue to receive fee payments while allegations of malpractice are investigated up to the point of formal conclusion of Standards of Care Investigation. Allowances will follow the child(ren) so could not be paid to the foster carer if the child(ren) is removed from their care during the investigation.

Review

Every financial year by the Fostering Service.