

# London Borough of Waltham Forest Scheme of Fees & Allowances For Foster Carers

2023/24



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## Introduction

London Borough Waltham Forest (LBWF) recognises:

- The skills, experience and commitment of foster carers caring for children and young people
- The role foster carers play in working with families in partnership with LBWF.

This document outlines the scheme of weekly payments made to foster carers and the Progression Scheme for all foster carers. For full details please refer to the Progression Scheme documents from the Fostering Service.

The payment scheme is based on the **payment for skills** principles recommended by the Fostering Network, and the Standards for Foster Care developed by The Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDS) to ensure that all foster carers receive induction, training, support, and Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

Annual inflation increases are made in April each year as agreed by LBWF.

HM Revenue and Customs produces a help sheet specifically for foster carers explaining how to fill in your Personal Tax Return. The help sheet ***HS236 - Qualifying care relief: foster carers, adult placement carers, kinship carers and staying put carers (2016)*** is available [here](#).

## Statement of Purpose

***The Fostering Services Regulations*** and the ***National Minimum Standards for Fostering 2011*** state that a fostering service needs a clear statement of aims and objectives.

Waltham Forest's Fostering Service's Statement of Purpose is:

**LBWF's Fostering Service works in partnership with children and young people, their families and carers to provide safe, caring homes which value the differences in children and young people and help them to achieve their full potential.**

We aim to achieve this by providing:

- safe, warm, stable, and caring family environments
- comprehensive support for children, young people, and carers
- encouragement for children and young people to meet their full potential and to mark and celebrate their successes
- personal and group support for carers and their families
- a flexible service which respects individual needs and values diversity
- measurable outcomes which strive to achieve, or exceed, National Standards
- a professional service which is accountable, financially viable, and maximises partnership opportunities.

We strive to be a service which fully meets and exceeds the National Minimum Standards. A full version of our statement of purpose is available [here](#)

## Basic principles of the payment scheme

Basic weekly allowances are payable to all mainstream foster carers and include an element to cover specific costs such as school excursions.

A travel allowance can be claimed individually by all carers - see page 15. The Carer's Progression Scheme (CPS) reflects a three-tiered approach and incorporates payments to all foster carers including Mainstream, Connected Carers, and Concurrent or Fostering to Adopt Carers. It recognises carer's skills, experience and learning and development in caring for children and young people with more complex needs. See page 7 for payment levels.

It enables carers, should they wish to do so, and should they have the necessary skills and competencies, to progress and develop the skills to care for children with complex needs. This is based on proven experience within fostering with a range of children and young people with differing needs, successful completion of the training support and development standards as well as attending core and additional training.

The payment scheme is designed to establish fair, equitable and transparent financial arrangements across the Borough. It is designed to make sure that foster carers and social work staff are clear about the payments to be made.

The Carer's Progression Scheme is reviewed on a periodic basis and any recommendations for amendments will be consulted on with carers, Directors, Councillors and staff.

## Payment of allowances

We wish to make sure that, wherever possible, payments are made direct into

the carer's bank or building society account. This will save unnecessary administration costs. Carers are paid using the Bankers Automated Clearing System (BACS). Allowances are paid weekly (or 4 weekly if that is the preference of the foster carer), and cover the period from Saturday to Friday. They can be drawn on Friday mornings.

### 1) Foster care allowance rates

The payments exceed those set out in *National Minimum Allowance Rates for Fostering*. They are payable to every foster carer approved by LBWF.

Age group	Daily rate 2023/24	Weekly rate 2023/24
0–4	£26.00	£182
5–8	£29.00	£203
9–10	£29.00	£203
11–12	£40.57	£284
13–16	£40.57	£284
16+	£44.29	£310

These rates are free from income tax, as long as they do not exceed your qualifying amount. To check this download the help sheet from HM revenue and Customs at: [link](#)

### 2) What the weekly payments cover

These payments are designed to cover the **full** cost of caring for the young person in placement. They exceed national minimum rates.

They incorporate all costs for:

- food
- clothing – initial, replacement due to wear and out-growing; and uniform
- pocket money and savings
- personal and household expenditure
- equipment
- special outings
- dental and optical needs
- activities – including clubs and hobbies
- school activities – including trips, holidays, and associated equipment
- telephone expenses.

## **Suggested Breakdown of the Child Related Allowance**

The allowance has been calculated to cover all child related expenditure and carers will find that there is sufficient money to put some money aside each week to budget for items such as sports equipment, winter clothing etc, and to replace toys, equipment, and furnishings as they wear out. This can be between £30 and £50 depending on the age and needs of the child.

## **Recommended Breakdown of the Weekly Allowance:**

	<b><u>Under 10's</u></b>	<b><u>11+</u></b>
Hair / Skin care	£5.00	£15.00
Leisure	£20.00	£35.00
Clothing	£20.00	£30.00
Food	£40.00	£50.00
Savings	£10.00	£10.00
Pocket money	£2.00 –£10.00	£10.00 – £20.00
Transport	£5.00	£10.00
Schooling Equipment	£5.00	£5.00
Toiletries	£5.00	£10.00
Household Expenses e.g. insurance, heating	£30.00	£40.00
Others - this part of the allowance should be kept for replacing furnishings, carpets and replacing equipment provided at approval.( this varies according to pocket money )	£31.97- £44.45	£53.74- £69.62
Total (Approx.)	£180	£280

Carers should keep receipts for all clothing. There is a minimum clothing list at the back of this document which shows the minimum expectation when a child moves from one placement to another after six months of being looked after.

It is important that children in care are provided with appropriate, well-fitting clothing. It is the fostering Supervising Social Worker and carer's responsibility to make sure that a clothing list is completed at the start and end of every placement. If, when a child moves to a new carer after six months, it is found the clothing is not adequate, then the previous carer will be expected to reimburse the costs of the shortfall.

These full weekly rates will be paid pro rata for emergency placements, and for short term and longer-term placements, to make sure that other disruption costs are covered, such as extra laundry involved in caring for a succession of children

on a short-term basis. Any part of a day that a child is in placement is paid at a full day's allowance. Where a child in foster care receives respite from another carer, both carers receive a full day's allowance for part days - See page 22.

In the case of Staying Put arrangements, young people in placement will be in receipt of their own allowance or benefits from which they are expected to support their own daily living needs.

## Carers Progression Scheme

The Carers Progression Scheme (CPS) continues to recognise carers' skills, experience, professional learning, and development. It aims to ensure that children with the most complex needs are placed with carers whose experience and competencies can meet those needs. Details of the scheme are published separately and include the criteria for approving progression. Details of the CPS and the competencies required for each Tier level can be provided by your Supervising Social Worker. These payments are made to foster carers approved under Regulation 27 Fostering Regulations 2011.

The three Tiers for the Scheme: -

**Each Foster Carer/Staying Put Carer must make sure that they take advice from their local tax office about their employment status and tax position.**

Grade	0-4 years	5-8 years	9-10 years	11-12 years	13-16 years	16+
Tier 1	£164	£164	£164	£164	£164	£164
Tier 2	£186	£186	£186	£186	£186	£186
Tier 3	£209	£209	£209	£209	£209	£209

The principles of the Carers Progression Scheme:

**A.** The Carers Progression Scheme was originally based on National Recommendations outlined in **Care Matters** and reflects a transparent three tier approach. All carers will receive the age-related fostering allowance and a payment for skills appropriate to their competency level for each placement.

i) Tier 1 includes newly approved Mainstream and Specific Carers within the first year of fostering, Tier 1 foster carers will be required to complete their Training, Support & Development workbook within the first year, (or 18 months for Family and Friends (Connected Persons) Foster Carers).

ii) Tier 2 includes all Mainstream carers who have been approved as a Foster Carer for at least one year and have met all the requirements of the scheme to progress to this level, including completion of TSDS. This includes availability to



care for children with a varying range of needs that come into local Authority care.

iii) Tier 3 includes all Mainstream carers who have been approved as a Foster Carer for at least three years and have met all the requirements of the scheme to progress to this level.

**B. Progression will be determined by:**

- i) Carers demonstrating that they have completed their Training, Support and Development Standards workbook within their first year of approval and met the competencies for their Tier and that they are undertaking to work at a higher level.
- ii) The successful completion of training as set out in the Carers Individual Development Plan. New carers will need to complete Core Training before they move to Tier 2. All carers will need to evidence that they have completed 28 hours of learning each year.
- iii) All foster carers are required to regularly attend Foster Carer Support Groups as a way of receiving and giving support, learning about fostering and contributing to the development of the Fostering Service. Foster Carers are expected to evidence a minimum of 50% attendance for each household each year.
- iv) Achieving 75% of time with a placement - providing the service can offer suitable placements.
- v) Achieving a positive review, including feedback from children's Social Workers, children, and birth parents.

**C. Progression will be discussed and recommended at each carer's annual review.**

Where a carer has been unable to demonstrate certain competencies at their current tier level, an Action Plan will be agreed between the carer, their Supervising Social Worker and their direct Line Manager and reviewed within six months. This will be brought to the attention of the Fostering Team Manager and the usual fostering regulatory processes will be followed.

**Additional fee payments.**

There are additional fee rates for children and young people with specific and additional needs. These are:

<b>Parent and child placement</b>	fee relevant to Tier achieved and age allowance for child and parent
<b>Day care rate*</b>	£11.95 per hour
<b>Children with additional needs – Medical, disability etc.</b>	Relevant tier fee plus a further 50% of achieved tier.
<b>Specialist Rate</b>	£545 plus allowance
<b>Staying put (18yrs+ placement)</b>	£316

The **Specialist rate** will be paid to carers caring for a child that would otherwise be placed in a therapeutic/residential placement. These carers will have progressed through the Tiers and demonstrated continued learning, development and experience beyond this. They have the skills and support to accept the placement.

The rate for **children with additional needs** is paid on a case-by-case basis when the Carer and Supervising Social Worker can evidence that the needs of the child exceed what is expected of a child of that age in Local Authority care. The needs will significantly impact upon the daily routine of the foster carer and will require additional expenditure, such as regular visits to hospital for medical appointments. Examples of this would be children with significant health needs such as oxygen dependency, seizures etc. There is a requirement that the carer makes an application for disability living allowance for that child where they meet the criteria for eligibility.

Foster carers are expected to have a suggested breakdown for the specialist rate like that on page 7, where the suggested breakdown of the fostering allowance has been given. Depending on the child's circumstances, foster carers are expected to put a reasonable amount aside per week to cover any damages caused by the child. Foster carers are also expected to be available to care for any child or make alternative arrangements within their support network to care for the child they have in placement for example if the child is out of school and if the situation requires it.

The **Staying Put** rate is a flat rate that includes the allowance and the fee.

\*Subject to agreement.

## Housing Benefits

In April 2013 new housing benefit rules came into force in England, Wales and Scotland as part of the reform of the welfare system. On 12 March the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) announced some last-minute changes in housing benefit reform, whereby one bedroom for fostered children is to be exempt from the so-called "bedroom tax". However, foster carers who foster two or three children will still be penalised.

While these changes in housing benefit reform do address the concerns of many foster carers, the DWP has since clarified that the changes will only cover one bedroom used for a child in foster care. This means that those who have two or three bedrooms for fostered children are not exempt and will have to apply to the discretionary housing fund for support with their housing costs.

Following advice from LBWF Revenue and Benefit Managers, LBWF Fostering Service recommend that all foster carers who claim housing benefit and face a reduction in their allowance through having been assessed as under-occupying

their property [welfare reform April 2013], inform their district housing benefit office that they are LBWF Council Foster Carers, and would like to apply for the Housing Benefit Discretionary Fund.

## Council Tax Discounts

The scheme of discounts will be based on the following principles:

i) Foster carers become eligible for Council Tax discount following assessment, after they have been approved by the LBWF Agency Decision Maker and have commenced the first placement of a LBWF LAC. The discount is pro-rata for the first year of approval.

ii) The applicable band of discount shall be in accordance with these criteria. Final agreement will be decided by Head of Placements & Resources Service and reviewed with every placement, with no right of appeal.

iii) Foster carers must have had a placement/s totalling 13 weeks/ 3 calendar months to qualify\*\*\*. Any foster carer who has not had a placement for a period of 3 calendar months\* will have their Council Tax discount reviewed and may not be eligible to receive the discount until they accept another placement. The decision of the Head of Placements & Resources is final with no right of appeal.

iv) Carers who are approved by LBWF but who live in a different local authority area who otherwise meet these criteria, will be eligible for a backdated payment as set out below.

The scheme Council tax discounts will be applied on the following criteria:

- Tier 1 & 2 Foster Carers (according to the Carers Progression Scheme) are eligible for a discount of 33%
- Tier 3 Foster Carers (according to the Carers Progression Scheme) are eligible for a discount of 50%
- Foster carers who accept placements of the following are eligible to be topped up to a discount of 66% for the duration of that placement
  - (a) LAC aged between 13 and 17
  - (b) placements of a parent and child together or
  - (c) placement of 3 or more siblings together
- Where a LBWF foster carer lives in another local authority area meaning that a Council tax discount cannot be applied they will be eligible for an annual payment of £498\*\* if they have met the qualifying criteria relating to having a current or recent placement during that financial year.

\*Calculated as 13 weeks

\*\* Calculated as the average Council Tax discount offered to LBWF residents

\*\*\* Apart from Mockingbird Home Hub Carers, who will be eligible for the discount in accordance with their Tier level (according to the Carers Progression Scheme).

### 3) Budgeting

As in any ordinary household, Foster Carers/DYPAS Carers will be expected to budget so that they can save money from the weekly allowance and use it as necessary during the year for expenses such as school trips or replacing household items no longer fit for use through wear and tear.

Foster carers are treated by HMRC as self-employed and must register their self-employment with HMRC once they have been approved as foster carers, regardless of whether they make a profit from fostering or not.

#### **How to register as a self-employed foster carer**

1. Online – this is the easiest way to do it and it will automatically enrol you for the online self-assessment tax return service.
2. By phone – alternatively, you can call the HMRC's Newly Self-Employed Helpline on 0300 200 3310.

### 4) Travel costs

These can now be claimed as an allowance payment within set guidance. See page 12.

### 5) Pocket money

The weekly rate includes money for a young person to have pocket money. We believe it is unhelpful to be too rigid about levels of pocket money but offer the following guidelines below.

Levels need to relate to what is comparable in the young person's own family, to what is given to the carer's own children, and to what the young person can expect to receive when he or she leaves the placement.

We expect carers to keep to the recommended amounts unless there are reasons, which should be discussed with the SSW and agreed at the PPM (Placement Planning or Agreement Meeting). The Fostering Service has considerable experience of supporting and working with carers and can offer advice and support to all carers.

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Suggested minimum allowance</b>
5-8	£5
9-12	£10
13-16	£15

16 plus	To be negotiated through the Young People's Pathway Plan.
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These are minimum figures, and it is recommended that carers create incentives by supplementing the weekly allowance with rewards for jobs done and good behaviour, and with extra for special events.

## 6) Emergency payments

Placements made in an emergency can be disruptive and, by their nature, can mean that carers need to provide for children immediately, before their weekly payment arrives. Foster Carers who agree to be available on the EDT list will be paid £50 per week to be available to accept emergency placements. Where any placement is made, payment for each child will commence from the first date of placement.

**In cases where children or young people arrive in an emergency with no clothing, or inadequate clothing, a payment of up to £100.00 for each child can be made if agreed in advance by Head of Service, Corporate Parenting, Placements.**

This payment is to provide for the immediate needs of the child and does not, for example, include the purchase of school uniform.

An additional payment for the purchase of school uniform can be requested via the child's Social Worker and authorised by their Line Manager in circumstances where a move has necessitated a change of school, or where the child arrives without a school uniform.

Where they are made, these emergency payments are additional to the regular weekly payments.

**The child's Social Worker, the carers' Supervising Social Worker and the carer should draw up a list of items to be purchased and the carer should keep the receipts.**

## 7) Festival and Birthday allowances

These payments are intended to cover the costs of gifts, entertainment and incidental expenses. Payments are made two weeks in advance, to allow carers to buy gifts; if a child moves placement within those two weeks either the gifts or the allowance will transfer to the new placement.

These allowances are paid at an age-related flat rate and triggered automatically on the relevant date by the Payments software.

<b>Age Band</b>	<b>Amount</b>
<b>0-4</b>	<b>£161</b>
<b>5-10</b>	<b>£183</b>
<b>11-16</b>	<b>£253</b>
<b>16+</b>	<b>£276</b>

## **8) Holiday allowances**

Holiday opportunities for children and young people in care should be made available and discussed with the child's Social Worker and fostering Supervising Social Worker and agreed as part of the Care Plan.

Rates of Holiday allowance per child are set out below.

<b>Age Band</b>	<b>Amount</b>
<b>0-4</b>	<b>£321</b>
<b>5-10</b>	<b>£365</b>
<b>11-16</b>	<b>£508</b>
<b>16+</b>	<b>£551</b>

For example, where children accompany foster carers on holiday the carer will receive the holiday allowance for spending on the child as per the table above.

Occasionally in respect of older teenagers and their individual circumstances, for example, when they are clearly stating they do not want to go on holiday or for day trips with their foster carer, consideration can be given to funding activities/days out for the young person as an alternative.

If the Foster Carer is not providing a holiday or day trips for the child, the holiday allowance may be used to pay for a holiday experience elsewhere. For example, a school trip abroad or residential holiday. Holiday allowances are not applicable in situations where the child is visiting or staying over with relatives or friends of the carer.

## 9) Insurance for Foster Carers

Fostering Network provides insurance cover, legal advice and legal expenses to foster carers who have taken up the offer of individual membership, courtesy of LBWF. Please refer direct to the Fostering Network for full details of this cover at: [here](#).

Foster carers are responsible for maintaining their buildings and contents insurance cover at a level which will cover fostering. Payments for damage as a result of fostering can only be made in exceptional circumstances where the household insurance cannot cover the damage.

Carers are expected to follow the guidelines on page 7 under suggested breakdown of the child's fostering allowance, There is an expectation for carers to put money aside on a weekly basis to cover households expenses and other damages which could be caused by the child in placement for example to furniture and other damages to the home.

In the event of any damage claims to the fostering home, carers will be required first and foremost to provide detailed evidence of the damage caused and how the weekly monies saved has been utilised to cover the damage.

## 10) Equipment

The Fostering Support Team has a small budget to make discretionary payments and consideration will be given to assisting carers when:

- Carers need specific furniture or equipment to care for a child with special needs
- Carers are being approved to take siblings and may need to buy bunk beds
- Carers are being approved to take babies and need equipment such as a cot
- Significant additional furniture needs to be bought on approval, or where there is a change of approval
- Equipment is needed to meet Health and Safety standards.

Please ask your fostering Supervising Social Worker for more details.

## 11) Savings

Looked After Children are disadvantaged in many ways. Apart from their earlier experiences, those that remain in care will leave care with only statutory support. Savings play a very important part in ensuring that a Care leaver has money set aside which can support them in their transition to adulthood and independent living. London Borough Waltham Forest requires that every foster carer (or organisation providing care for Looked After Children) will set aside at least £10



per week as savings for the Looked After Child or Young Person. LBWF are participating in the Junior ISA arrangements which have followed on from the Child Trust Funds set up previously. For most children and young people their Junior ISA Account will be their long-term savings account. All children and young people who have been in care for 12 months or more, on or after 1st June 2014, and who do not have a Child Trust Fund (CTF) will have a Junior ISA set up for them by the Local Authority. This is subject to central regulation by the Government. The Local Authority, the child / young person and their carer /care provider can make additional contributions to this account and there is an expectation that their savings will be put into this account. The carer should deposit the savings on a regular basis and provide evidence of this to their Supervising Social Worker 6 monthly and to the Independent Reviewing Officer for each child in placement at LAC Reviews.

In addition, Looked After Children and Young People should be encouraged to make short term savings as part of learning to budget. These should be kept separately to the ISA or CTF. These short-term savings can be used and accessed by the young person to purchase things that they wish to save for or to be transferred to the ISA periodically to add to their long term savings.

## 12) Transport

Carers can claim all allowable transport costs for journeys over 20 miles per trip associated with the child. It is expected that wherever possible and appropriate, carers will be responsible for the transport of children in placement.

All car and bus journeys made solely on behalf of the foster child must be detailed on the claim form, which is submitted monthly to the child's Social Worker.

Allowable costs include journeys over 20 miles:

- to school or college, (daily round trip)
- to doctors, dentists, hospitals, and other therapeutic clinics
- to contact family members and others, as negotiated with carers and detailed in the Care Plan
- in connection with the potential placement of a child.

The Fostering Service expects that carers will involve young people in their care in the normal activities of everyday family life - such as trips to the beach and weekend outings. These are not regarded as being costs associated solely with the child and are not therefore eligible for additional payment.

### **Carers using their own cars**

All the mileage outlined above must be claimed each month on the relevant form, clearly stating the meeting or type of training attended to make sure costs are taken from the correct budget. All claims made outside of a three-month period



will need senior management approval before being processed.

The rate for mileage will be at the current London Borough Waltham Forest rate of, **45p per mile**.

Special journeys, for example those going out of area, need to be agreed as part of the planning and review process.

It is the carer's responsibility to make sure their vehicle has valid insurance, which includes transporting foster children; MOT and road tax documents, and is in good, safe working order.

### **Carers using public transport**

All bus tickets for a child should be submitted each month. If a carer is accompanying the child on a bus journey, the carer should submit their ticket as well.

A bus pass for the young person should be considered if bus travel would be an appropriate and cost-effective alternative to transport by the carer. The full cost of a bus pass for school or college will be reimbursed. Where there is a delay in issuing a pass, carers will be reimbursed in full on submission of bus tickets for school journeys.

If you use a car and public transport, please claim **all** costs.

## **13) Transport costs excluding mileage**

### **Rear seat belts**

At the approval stage, carer's cars must be equipped with rear seat belts. If your vehicle is fitted with anything other than standard manufacturers' belts, please discuss the situation with your fostering Supervising Social Worker.

### **Child safety restraints**

If a child has special needs, for example disabilities, then additional safety restraints appropriate to the child should be provided at the expense of LBWF.

Safety restraints purchased by LBWF remain our property. If the carer stops caring for children with special needs, the child safety restraints must be returned. If removal and return of restraints is impractical, please discuss this matter with the child's Social Worker.

### **Guidance on child seat and seat belt laws**

The law requires all children to be carried in an appropriate child restraint from birth until either they are 135 cm (4' 5") tall or have reached the age of 12. They must then use a seat belt and it would be preferable to use a booster seat until they are 150 cm (5') tall.

Children under three years must use an appropriate child restraint when travelling in the front or rear of a car. They cannot be carried in a car that does not have seat belts, because it will not be possible to fit a child restraint.

Children aged 3–11 years and under 1.35m (4'5") tall must use an appropriate child restraint when travelling in the front seat of a car, and when travelling in the rear of a car if seat belts are fitted.

It is the driver's responsibility to make sure that all children use an appropriate child restraint or wear their seat belt.

Carers are expected to provide suitable child safety seats. If the purchase causes hardship, please discuss the situation with your fostering Supervising Social Worker before any child needing a seat is placed with you.

Carers who use a motorcycle as their means of transport must seek advice and permission from the child's Social Worker and their fostering Supervising Social Worker before transporting any child in placement.

#### **14) Membership of the Fostering Network**

Mainstream, Family and Friends Connected Carers, Parent & Child Assessment Service, and Concurrency carers will be invited to join the Fostering Network post approval at the Adoption and Fostering Panel, paid for by London Borough Waltham Forest.

Visit <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/>

#### **15) Children with special needs**

The child's Social Worker should make sure that any relevant disability allowances are claimed. Carers are expected to be able to evidence in their recording log how the allowances are being used to benefit the child.

In situations where special furniture, equipment, or car safety restraints are assessed as being necessary to care for the child, London Borough Waltham Forest should supply these, where they are not provided by the health service.

#### **16) School meals**

Children in foster care are not entitled to free school meals, even if they were receiving them while living at home. Even if Foster Carers are receiving benefits which entitle their own children to free school meals, those for foster children must be paid for from the weekly allowance.

## 17) Contact

The Local Authority is required to promote and facilitate contact between a child and significant family members whilst they are in care. The child's own wishes and feelings must be considered, having regard to their age and degree of understanding. Foster Carers are key figures in facilitating contact both indirectly through letters and cards, and direct face to face contact or telephone calls.

### **A) Contact facilitated by Foster Carers in respect of foster children placed with them**

Where the care planning allows and it is in the child's best interest, it is expected that Foster Carers will facilitate up to two contact sessions a week (maximum of two hours each session), in their own home, if appropriate and safe to do.

The child's Social Worker will agree with Foster Carers and their Supervising Social Worker the amount of contact, if any, which can take place in the foster home without undermining ordinary family life and routines. This needs to consider:

- the purpose of contact – is this for assessment or promoting identity.
- the foster child's own needs, likely behaviour, and reason for being in care
- the relatives' needs and likely behaviour
- the carer's own family situation, their experience and expected role as facilitators within the contact sessions
- the practicalities of contact taking place in the carers home e.g., space, location, travel, competing needs of other Children in Care and/or carer's own family, etc.

We expect all carers to facilitate sibling contact for children placed with them on an informal /formal basis as required to meet the needs of individual children.

### **B) Contact Supervision by formally trained Foster Carers**

For carers who have undertaken the Supervising Contact and Recording training through the Intervention Service and who are willing to formally supervise contact, either in their home or at an agreed venue, payments can be made with the agreement of the child's Social Worker. This can include supervised contact both in respect of children placed with them or with other carers.

The payment rate in respect of this formally supervised contact (including recording of the session) will be at the Sessional Contact Supervisor's rate (currently **£12.96 per hour**).

Carers wishing to offer this service need to inform their Supervising Social Worker in the first instance and if agreed will be provided with training in respect of how to formally supervise and record these contact sessions.

## **18) Respite**

Respite breaks can have a role to:

- maintain a child in their own family environment
- support and maintain complex placements as part of an agreed placement or Care Plan
- assist carers in maintaining placements when emergencies or unforeseen circumstances arise, for example the illness of a carer or member of their family; or the need for a break if the situation in the carer's home becomes critical due to the deterioration of a child's situation.
- allow carers to take a break from the fostering role.

However, the value base of the fostering service is that children should feel as if they are a full part of the family. Therefore, respite arrangements will only be agreed if they are a necessary part of the child's care plan and that arrangements for respite are sensitive to the child's need to have a sense of belonging.

### **Respite arrangements to support placements**

Any such arrangements must be detailed in the child's placement or Care Plan and reviewed and amended regularly as part of the care planning process and agreed with the child's Social Worker and Supervising Social Worker.

The respite carer receives both the weekly allowance for the child, and the appropriate Carers Progression Scheme payment, pro rata including day of arrival and day of departure.

The primary carer loses the weekly allowance for the duration of the respite, but keeps the CPS payment; however, the weekly allowance is paid on day of departure and day of return.

Any existing respite arrangement will be honoured while the current children remain in placement. This will only change if the placement or Care Plan is altered and respite arrangements are no longer required or occur at a different frequency.

If, for any reason, a respite arrangement is made and then has to be extended due to unforeseen circumstances, for example the unexpected length of illness of a carer or member of their family, then the placement must be reviewed and consideration given to the future funding of the arrangement.

### **Respite to allow carers to take a break from the fostering role**

Carers can request up to a maximum of two weeks per year per fostering household (not per placement). The main carer will receive the respective CPS

fee in respect of any child in placement at the time minus the weekly allowance payment. The respite carer will receive the respective weekly allowance plus the progression scheme payment in respect of any child in placement. Respite requests exceeding two weeks will not be paid.

## 19) Overpayments to foster carers

Overpayments are reclaimable by LBWF. Overpayments should normally be repaid in full immediately. However, it may be possible, in exceptional circumstances, to recover the overpayment by instalments at the discretion of the Head of Service, Placements, Corporate Parenting.

Carers have a responsibility to notify their SSW in the event of an over or underpayment, especially if it has not been rectified within two weeks. Foster Carers and Staying Put Carers can do this by contacting the Fostering or Finance team.

## 20) Carers subject to allegations

If a carer is subject to an allegation that necessitates the removal of the child to allow an investigation, the carer will be entitled to eight weeks payment of the CPS fee in place from the date of the child's removal.

The weekly allowance payment will cease on the day that the child is removed. If the investigation is not completed within eight weeks, it is at the discretion of the Head of Service, Placements, Corporate parenting, whether any further payment should be made.

If an allegation is made while the carer is between placements, and so not receiving any allowances, no payment will be made.

Carers subject to allegations will be supported by WFFCA and can seek further support through Fostering network.

## 21) Training expenses

Fees for carers, who are trained trainers, offering training to others are paid at an hourly rate, and include time taken for preparation. Please make claims for the Skills to foster courses and the information evenings using the relevant form and clearly state the title of the group or training attended.

### Skills to Foster

As an experienced foster carer	<b>£50 (full day)</b>
Attendance for young people	<b>£20 per session</b>

## Information Evenings

As an experienced foster carer   **£20 per session**  
Attendance for young people   **£15 per session**

Young people contributing to Skills to Foster sessions or Information Evenings should be offered a voucher. If this is not acceptable, we will pay cash from the Petty Cash account. A cash request needs to be authorised and signed by the Head of Service, Placements, Corporate Parenting, prior to the young person's attendance at the session. This will avoid late payments.

## 22) Working with teenagers and care leavers

### Working with young people aged 16 and 17

By the time a young person reaches 16 years and 3 months the allocated Social Worker will have completed a reassessment of their needs and written a Pathway Plan.

This assessment will focus on what they need to learn to make a successful transition to adult life. The Care Plan will be replaced by the Pathway Plan. It will continue to be reviewed at least every six months and more frequently if there are significant changes in the young person's life.

The Pathway Plan should be explicit in the details of skills the young person needs to learn and how the young person will learn them. The Foster Carer will be expected to work closely on helping the young person to learn how to cater and cook for themselves. The Foster Carer will be expected to work with the young person to understand how they can manage on a limited budget, and to plan their shopping and spending. The young person will also need to learn practical household skills. In addition to learning these practical skills young people will also need to be helped to develop 'softer skills' like gathering information, time management and resolving conflicts.

The Pathway Plan should contain clear goals for the young person to achieve with detail of how they are to be supported in learning these skills. It is important that our young people are given the opportunity to test out these skills and supported when they are not successful to try again.

*In appropriate circumstances the Pathway Plan may be very similar to that of a Staying Put placement for a Care leaver over 18 years old, but it must be understood that where a young person is still legally a child, the placement is a foster placement.*

If a young person is working full time, it is expected that they contribute towards their keep. The exact details of the scale of payment and arrangement for paying this money should be discussed with the Social Worker/ Leaving Care Coach (LCC). The carer will receive their full weekly allowance in the normal way.

As part of the process of helping the young person to achieve independence consideration must be given to how their accommodation needs are going to be met after age 18. One option may be to 'Stay Put' –see below. Other options may be to return to the birth family, a move to supported housing or their own accommodation. This will mean that the young person will have to have an interview with the local housing department when they are about 17 years 6 months.

## **Working with young people over 18**

LBWF has a Staying Put Protocol available [here](#).

This allows young people to remain with their carers beyond their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday with certain key changes from fostering which are outlined below. It is recognised that many care leavers, like other young people should be able to remain living with their carers if this meets their need to do so and LBWF shares this ambition: The research on Staying Put is showing that many young people only want to extend the time they remain with their Foster Carers by 9 to 18 months, and this is often linked to completing an academic course.

## **Arrangements for setting up a Staying Put Placement**

At the first review of the Pathway Plan, following the young person's 16<sup>th</sup> birthday; it should be discussed whether it is appropriate for a young person to Stay Put after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Agreement can only be given where a Staying Put arrangement would support a young person's education or training plan or is necessary to support them in developing their independence skills where they have additional vulnerabilities. Getting approval at Resource Panel as early as possible gives the young person and the carer an increased sense of stability and continuity.

Staying Put may be appropriate for a young person because their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday falls early in the academic year, or they have started a college course which will last until the following July or longer and they will need the stability of their current placement to support them in completing the course. It may be that the young person needs more time to resolve personal problems or more time to increase their confidence in coping on their own. Measures introduced in 2014 have extended the time that a young person can be supported to 21 years where this is supported by their needs as set out in their Pathway Plan. The Care leavers offer extends this to 25 years of age in certain circumstances.

If the Pathway Plan is to be extended to a staying put agreement, the young person's placement must be agreed between the Foster Carer, the young person's Social Worker/ LCC and the Supervising Social Worker. The Social Worker/LCC must then seek agreement from the Assistant Director, Corporate Parenting and Resources Panel. It must be clear how long the Staying Put period



is for and its purpose.

Once a young person reaches 18, they are no longer a Child in Care, and the placement can no longer be classed as a foster placement. The legal basis on which they occupy the property becomes one of an 'excluded licensee' and they are effectively lodging in the carers' home.

If the young person has enduring health and learning issues, they may meet the social care services criteria for Fair Access to Adult Care assessment (FACS) and the arrangements for continuing the placement could come under this scheme. This is likely only to apply to a few young people who are supported by the Transitions Service.

If a carer intends to continue fostering other children, they will remain subject to fostering regulations. If the carer decides not to continue to foster, they will need to resign as a carer. Depending on their, and the young person's plans, a decision will be made about the level of supervision they will receive if they decide to resign as carers. As a minimum it will be expected that DBS checks will be undertaken on any adults who move into the household.

The carer will provide a similar level of care and the young person will be able to benefit from living in the household and having access to kitchen and laundry facilities. The Pathway Plan will specify tasks that the carer will undertake to support the young person develop their independent living skills.

The carer will receive a Staying Put allowance of £316 per week.

The financial support available to the young person will change as they are no longer a Child in Care, and they will be able to access state benefits where appropriate. They will be able to claim Housing Benefit and the money received will be paid to LBWF and will contribute towards the cost of the placement. The carer will receive their full payment from LBWF by the BACS system.

The young person may be entitled to claim Income Support if they are in non-advanced education or a single parent carer; or Job Seekers Allowance/Employment and Support Allowance if they have a limited capacity to work. From this income, they will be expected to contribute £30 per week toward the cost of their food, heating and lighting. This money will be paid to the carer. If the young person is working and receiving a wage, they will also be expected to make a contribution towards their care.

Financial implications for Foster Carers and Staying Put Carers can be found on the Fostering Network website or in the HMRC leaflet ***Staying Put: Arrangements for Care Leavers aged 18 years and above***. The HMRC provides advice on tax and national insurance for hosts and carers. You can download the help sheet [here](#).



For information from The Fostering Network visit [here](#):

### 23) Parent & Child Fostering

LBWF are keen to develop the availability of Parent & Child foster placements. In these situations, either the parent or child, or both parent and child may be looked after. The primary focus of the foster carer is to ensure that the child is safeguarded. However, this needs to be done alongside developing the parenting skills of the parent and supporting their needs.

In principle, **no other placements** can be taken simultaneously alongside a Parent & Child Assessment Arrangement (in accordance with CoramBAAF Guidance). However, if there are matching considerations, with the agreement of the relevant child's Social Workers, consideration will be given by the Assistant Director, Corporate Parenting for additional placements to be made alongside the Parent & Child placement on a case by case basis. Payments for stranger children placed alongside are made in accordance with the basic payments identified elsewhere in this document.

#### Allowance

	Weekly Rate 2023/24	Daily Rate 2023/2024
Parent and single child	The appropriate carers CPS fee plus the age allowance for each child or young person	One seventh of weekly rate for any part of any day of placement
One Parent and two children	The appropriate carers CPS fee plus the age allowance for each child or young person	One seventh of weekly rate for any part of any day of placement

The Allowance is paid to the carer. It is expected that the parent meets their child's and their own financial needs independently, where they are in receipt of their own benefits. On the rare occasion, where essentials are required for the infant (and the parent has not made necessary provision) the carer is expected to ensure the needs of the child (only) are met and provisions are paid from the

allowance.

There is an expectation that where parents are over 16 years old and either receiving benefits or eligible for benefits, they will maintain full financial responsibility, and provide for their own, and their baby's needs while in placement. This includes food, clothing, and nappies. **Financial arrangements need to be clearly agreed at the pre-placement planning meeting.** No deductions will be made from the foster carer allowances.

## Complaints

In the event of disagreement about allowances that cannot be resolved by discussion between the carer, their fostering supervising social worker and the relevant children's team or with Management intervention carers should refer to the LBWF complaints procedure.

You can contact the Families and Homes Complaints Team [here](#)

If you do not feel that your complaint has been dealt with adequately by the complaint's procedure, you can contact **Ofsted**:

- Tel **08456 404045** about education, adult skills or children's services
- Email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)
- Royal Exchange Buildings, St Ann's Square Manchester M2 7LA

## Questions or queries

If you have any queries about the foster carer rates, contact your fostering Supervising Social Worker; or Fostering Team Manager, Corporate Parenting.

## Appendix 1 Minimum items of clothing

This list has been drawn up by foster carers as a guide to the minimum that should be handed over when a child moves from one placement to another.

An assessment of a child's clothing needs will be included in the placement plan. Carers are required to make a list of all clothing when children arrive, and when they leave. This can then be countersigned as an accurate record by the Fostering Supervising Social Worker. A form is available from your Fostering Team. This will avoid any issues arising later about inadequate clothing.

Wherever possible the continuing contribution of those with parental responsibility should be encouraged. The statutory reviews offer opportunities to address clothing needs and make sure that they are being met appropriately. The clothes should be sufficient quality and size to last for the next three months. Foster carers are accountable for the money they have received for clothing, and for making sure that when the child moves on they are adequately and appropriately clothed. Please keep receipts.

### Young people age 16+

- 3 sets of night clothes
- 1 leisure jacket or coat
- 6 pairs of socks or tights
- 6 pairs of knickers or pants
- 3 bras (girls)
- 3 tops (for example t-shirts)
- 3 bottoms (trousers, skirts, shorts)
- 3 jumpers, cardigans or sweatshirts
- 1 pair of slippers
- 1 dressing gown
- 1 pair of leisure shoes or trainers
- 1 set of sports gear / swimsuit
- 1 holdall or suitcase
- 1 smart outfit (appropriate for job/college interview)
- 1 smart pair of shoes (appropriate for job/college interview)

### Secondary school age children

- 3 sets of night clothes
- 1 leisure jacket or coat
- 6 pairs of socks or tights
- 6 pairs of knickers or pants
- 3 bras (girls)
- 3 tops (t-shirts etc)
- 3 bottoms (trousers, skirts, shorts)
- 3 jumpers, cardigans, or sweatshirts
- 1 pair of slippers
- 1 dressing gown
- 1 pair of leisure/play shoes or trainers

- 1 pair of wellies
- 1 pair of school shoes
- 1 school coat
- 2 sets of school uniform
- 1 set of sports gear/swimwear
- 1 holdall or suitcase

### **Primary school age children**

- 3 sets of nightclothes
- 1 leisure jacket or coat
- 4 vests
- 6 pull-ups, if needed
- 6 pairs of socks or tights
- 6 pairs of knickers or pants
- bras as needed (girls)
- 3 tops (t-shirts etc)
- 3 bottoms (trousers, skirts, shorts)
- 3 jumpers, cardigans, or sweatshirts
- 1 pair of slippers
- 1 dressing gown or sleepsuit
- 1 pair of leisure/play shoes
- 1 pair of wellies
- 1 pair of school shoes
- 1 school coat
- 2 sets of school uniform
- 1 set of sports gear/swimwear
- 1 holdall or suitcase
- 1 hat and pair of gloves

### **Pre-school age children**

- 3 sets of nightclothes
- 1 leisure jacket or coat
- 4 vests
- 6 nappies or pull-ups if needed
- 6 pairs of socks or tights
- 6 pairs of knickers or pants
- 3 tops (t-shirts etc)
- 3 bottoms (trousers, skirts, shorts)
- 3 jumpers, cardigans, or sweatshirts
- 1 pair of slippers
- 1 dressing gown or sleepsuit
- 1 pair of leisure/play shoes
- 2 sets of school uniform, if needed
- 1 pair of wellies
- 1 holdall or suitcase
- 1 hat and pair of gloves

**Babies – birth to one year**

- 3 sets of day clothes
- 3 sets of nightclothes (or baby grows)
- 1 leisure jacket or coat
- 6 vests
- 12 nappies
- 6 pairs of socks or tights
- 3 jumpers, cardigans, or sweatshirts
- 1 dressing gown or sleepsuit
- 1 holdall or suitcase
- 1 hat and pair of gloves
- 1 red book

Everything must fit and be in good condition. When a child or young person moves on, their clothing and items must be placed in suitable sized suitcase/s.