

FOSTER CARERS – PAYMENT FOR SKILLS SCHEME

1ST APRIL 2018 - 31ST MARCH 2019

FOSTER CARERS – PAYMENT FOR SKILLS SCHEME - May 2017

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Basic Fostering Allowances for Children and Young People
3. Supplementary Allowances
4. General Payment Issues
5. Skills Based Scheme

Appendix A:

Allowances and Skills Based Payments

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This guide is for foster carers and those who authorise payments to carers, supervising social workers and staff involved in the supervision of children in placement.
- 1.2. This guide outlines the nature and details of payments to be made to foster carers and replaces the Foster carer Payment for Skills scheme August 2003.
- 1.3. Payments to foster carers can only be made where they have been formally recommended for approval via a Fostering Panel and approval ratified by the Agency Decision Maker, or under Regulation 24 (Care Planning Regulations) where approval is for Connected Care.
- 1.4. Please ensure that you read and understand this guidance. Advice on any aspect of these allowances is available from a supervising social worker.
- 1.5. Payments to carers are divided into 2 categories as follows:
 - **Fostering Maintenance Allowances** – These are remuneration and reimbursement payments. They are paid to cover the daily costs of caring for a child or young person and other payments made to cover specific costs they incur.
 - **Skills Based Payments** – These are fee payments, paid to carers recognising their skills, experience and qualifications in caring for children and young people based on an assessment by the fostering team. The skills based payments are paid when there is a child in placement or in the specific circumstances outlined in the payments scheme.
- 1.6. **National Insurance and Tax:** All self- employed people should register to pay class 2 national insurance contributions to ensure eligibility for their pension. This registration will then require the person to complete a self-assessment for tax purposes.

- 1.7. **Tax:** Foster carers are not employed by Calderdale and are therefore considered self-employed with individual responsibility for income tax and national insurance contributions.

The 2003 Finance Act introduced a new tax relief for foster carers. Tax paid by foster carers is now calculated on all fees and allowances, however, most foster carers will not receive payments from the department that exceed the qualifying amount and these payments are therefore exempt from tax.

- 1.8. **Tax Exemption** – There is a fixed tax exemption of up to £10,000 per year (less if for a shorter period) which is shared equally among any foster carers in the same household. This means you don't have to pay tax on the first £10,000 income (after expenses) you make from fostering.
- 1.9. **Tax Relief** - On top of the £10,000 exemption, you also get tax relief for every week (or part week) that a child is in your care. This means you don't have to pay tax on some of your earnings over £10,000.

Age of child

Under 11 £200 per child

Over 11 £250 per child

Social workers in the fostering service are unable to give advice on tax and benefit claims but can give you the contact details of agencies with the relevant expertise. Please see direct.gov.uk for further information or www.hmrc.gov.uk

2. BASIC FOSTERING ALLOWANCES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- 2.1. This is a basic weekly allowance paid for all children looked after in foster families, which varies according to the child's age.

Age	Weekly Total	Daily Total	Birthday /festival allowance
0-1	£127	£18.14	£82.80
1-4	£130	£18.57	£82.80
5-10	£143	£20.43	£93.31
11-15	£164	£23.43	£116.77
16+	£191	£27.29	£146.60

- 2.2. Breakdown of the weekly child allowance provides guidance to foster carers:

Age	Food	Clothing	Transport	Personal	Household	Total
0-1	34%	22%	8%	6%	30%	100%
1-4	34%	22%	8%	6%	30%	100%

5-10	32%	26%	7%	8%	27%	100%
11-15	32%	26%	11%	10%	21%	100%
16+	30%	26%	9%	17%	18%	100%

2.3. The basic weekly fostering allowance covers:

General maintenance including food, accommodation, household costs

- School dinner monies.
- Nappies /baby items
- Personal self care items
- Toys, books and games
- Normal replacement of clothing
- Pocket money
- Normal transport associated with any child living within a family including to and from a local school or nursery.
- Involvement in clubs and activities
- Keeping a record of events and memories about the child for the child
- Luggage costs associated with placement moves.

2.4. Guidance on specific items within the maintenance allowance:

– Leisure/Activities

Foster Carers are expected to enable children and young people to take part in leisure activities or to take part in day trips etc. A proportion of the Allowance should be used to pay for these and for the membership of a hobby or leisure club and/or contribute towards the cost of a social activity at least once weekly.

Foster Carers may apply for extra funding for exceptional costs in order to support leisure/learning/activities.

This must be discussed with the foster carers SSW and child's SW to establish agreement before applying via the child's SW to the Team Manager (CLA). Any decision to provide financial assistance should be time limited and reconsidered at each Child Care Review.

Foster Carers are given MAX cards and Children Looked After are signed up to Active Lifestyles allowing affordable leisure and educational opportunities.

– Pocket money

The pocket money allowance is provided to children and young people for their general and personal requirements. It is an expectation that foster carers will provide children with pocket money. Children may supplement pocket money by undertaking age appropriate chores around the home. Foster carers with young children should use the pocket money allowance to cover the costs of activities, comics, sweets etc. An amount saved from pocket money should be allocated towards encouraging savings (see savings below). Foster carers should

exercise own judgement on suitable amounts for pocket money age appropriate to a child's needs.

– Savings

As a broad principle, foster carers should be encouraging children and young people to develop a custom of saving money for their future life and needs,

Children and young people should be encouraged by foster carers (and by agreement with them) to develop a savings habit by saving a regular weekly amount. Amounts may be paid directly into a savings account from the fostering allowance (e.g. clothing and pocket money element) and where the young person's Foster Carer, SSW and child's SW are in agreement.

An amount could be added to their Share Foundation (junior I.S.A <https://sharefound.org>) if they have been looked after for 12 months or more it could be used to set up a tax free savings account (I.S.A).

When children or young people transfer between placements the savings account should also transfer with them.

The young person's social worker, with support from the supervising social worker and foster carers should assist a child/young person to open a bank account in the name of the child/young person wherever this is possible.

Young people (16+) who are receiving income from employment should be encouraged to save some of their clothing and pocket money allowance.

– Clothing and footwear

The clothing and footwear element should be used flexibly to purchase/replace items directly by foster carer/s as necessary for young children and can be provided to older children and young people as required. The use of the allowance will differ between individuals but for older children this can be agreed by the foster carer, supervising social worker (SSW) and the child/young person's SW.

3. SUPPLEMENTARY ALLOWANCES

3.1. Birthday, festival and holiday allowances

Additional payments will be made towards the cost of birthdays, festivals and holidays.

The Holiday Allowance is equivalent to two weeks basic fostering allowance.

Each child living with foster carers is entitled to the holiday allowance. The Annual Holiday Allowance is paid in addition to the weekly maintenance

allowance and should be used to contribute towards expenses associated with taking the child or young person on holiday.

The payment relates to the financial year April to March. The holiday allowance is paid to allow carers to take a child on holiday or to be used for holiday activities. Where the holiday is less than a week, one weeks allowance will be paid.

Foster carers are not authorised to remove children from school for holidays.

Requests to fund activities in place of a holiday will need to be discussed with the supervising social worker and appropriate figures agreed. This allowance will only be paid to fund holidays outside school term. More than one allowance will only be considered by the fostering team manager in a financial year when a child changes placement.

If carers are undertaking overseas travel, adequate travel insurance must be obtained and a copy of the policy provided for the child's SW. Appropriate consent is required for all trips where children will be taken out of the country (as detailed in Children's procedures)

A grant will be made automatically for a child's birthday. The birthday allowance is provided to purchase a gift or gifts and to provide a contribution towards the cost of celebrations.

The Christmas/Festival allowance is provided to purchase a gift or gifts and to provide a contribution towards the cost of celebrations. If the allowance is required for an alternative religious festival, a request should be made via the SSW.

3.2. Initial clothing

A child/young person can be given an initial clothing allowance at the discretion of the fostering team manager. The initial clothing allowance is only paid in exceptional circumstances, where children and young people are without sufficient clothing and footwear. It is intended to cover emergency situations whereby children become looked after and have no suitable or limited clothing.

Initial clothing grants can only be paid during the first 6 weeks that a child/young person becomes looked after, irrespective of placements. Applications for the initial clothing allowance should be made via the child's social worker, following discussion with the foster carer and the supervising social worker. If agreement has not been made by the fostering team manager, then the carer will not be automatically reimbursed. The maximum amounts payable are:-

Age	Amount
0 – 11 yrs (primary school)	£150
11-18yrs(secondary school)	£250

3.3. School uniform

Payment for school clothing is only made when a child or young person is changing or starting a new school. All other replacement costs are expected to be met through the clothing element contained within the fostering allowance. The same applies to sports equipment and sports clothing.

Carers can claim up to £100 for primary school and up to £250 for secondary school.

3.4. Transport costs

The basic fostering allowance includes an element for travelling costs, which are part of the normal pattern of expenditure incurred in looking after foster children.

Examples of travel costs which the foster carer would be expected to absorb within the fostering allowance would include:

- Normal trips for medical appointments
- Transport to and from school where the school is less than three miles from the foster home.

Transport to and from school or nursery where the school is less than two miles from the foster home for primary age and below children.

- Attendance at reviews, case conferences and child protection meetings, including parking costs.
- Taking and collecting the child from social activities.

Examples of travel which may be supplemented by the department are:

- Travel to and from school/nursery. Foster carers may claim mileage in excess of the first three miles of each return trip for secondary age children and mileage in excess of two miles for primary aged children
- Contact and transitions
- The cost of travel to and from hospital where the child has frequent appointments with a hospital consultant or specialist, including parking costs.
- The cost of travel to training and from the venue.

Where public transport is used, the same criteria apply in relation to what is eligible to be claimed, and above costs will be reimbursed. Car travel is currently paid for at the rate of 45 pence per mile. Taxi fares will only be reimbursed in exceptional circumstances.

- All young people under the age of 18 who are in full time education are entitled to a School plus Metro card. Claims for additional mileage need to be made to the supervising social worker and wherever possible considered in the Placement Plan.

The fostering team manager will make authorisation for these claims.

Additional mileage that has been agreed is claimed by completing a weekly mileage sheet, submitted to the supervising social worker. Mileage must be claimed within 8 weeks of accruing it.

4. School organised holidays and trips

School trips under £50 are paid for from the child's maintenance allowance and should be budgeted for throughout the year. The department will consider meeting the cost of educational field trips and residential courses that are an integral and necessary part of the child's school curriculum.

These requests should be referred to the fostering team manager.

The department is not able to meet the cost of school organised holidays such as skiing holidays.

4.1. Additional Items

The following additional items will be paid for by the department as they belong to the child:

- Spectacles up to a value of £100
- Passports

4.2. Religious and Cultural Needs

Where appropriate (e.g. as part of the placement plan) and dependant on an assessment of need by the SW and SSW, additional funds can be provided aimed at meeting identified religious and cultural needs. Requests for additional funds should be made in advance of any expenditure and should be made to the Fostering Team manager via the SSW.

4.3. Young people in employment

Employed young people 16 to 18 years should pay an assessed part of their take home pay to their foster carer for board and lodgings. The Leaving Care Service will undertake this assessment. The amount the young person pays to the foster carer will then be deducted from the basic weekly allowance. This arrangement will be reassessed following any change in employment circumstances.

4.4. Parent and child

See procedure Parent and Child Foster Carer Placements – Policy, Procedure and Placement Preparation.

When the carer has a parent and child placement, the carer will receive a Skill Based Payment x 2 and the fostering allowance equivalent for age of parent and child (minus any state benefits the parent may receive). If parent is over 18, then the 16-18 years rates applies. If a carer is on hold for a potential placement, they will receive 50%

Foster carers should make a regular weekly payment out of their fostering allowance to the parent of baby in a parent and baby placement. The payment of an allowance to the parent is an important part of the support and supervision of the parent by the foster carer. The amount paid will depend upon any benefits received by the parent and must be clarified at the outset of the placement and incorporated into the placement plan.

4.5 Placement guarantee

Foster carers who offer beds to the emergency duty team (EDT) receive £80.00 per admission in addition to pro rata skills based payment and child allowance.

4.6 Staying put

Staying put arrangements attract a fee of £138.88 per week. Birthday and festival payments are made direct to the young person. Each staying put agreement is negotiated individually with the foster carer, the young person and the leaving care service.

5. GENERAL PAYMENT ISSUES

5.1. Payments to carers

Payments are made to foster carers on a weekly basis into a bank/building society account by BACS. All payments for foster carers are generated by notification to the Placement Co-ordinator. Remittance slips will be emailed.

If a request for payment is to be acted upon by Carer payments in a particular week, notification must be provided by 12 noon of the Friday of the week before. The payment will then be made the subsequent Thursday.

In the circumstances of a two carer household separating, carers will be expected to negotiate the fees and allowance for the child/ren when children have contact with the non- resident carer. The department will not pay both carers. If carers are unable to reach an amicable resolution, the department will prescribe the proportion of fees and allowances.

The Department will make every effort to ensure overpayments of fees or allowances do not occur. However, the foster carer has an individual responsibility to check all payment information received and to contact Carer Payments immediately if an overpayment does occur. In the event of an overpayment, the Department will seek to recover the full amount.

Recovery of up to 8 weeks overpayment is able to be identified by the electronic payments system and is recovered automatically.

Where significant overpayments are identified (overpayments more than an 8 week period) these will be notified by the carer payments team/finance to Service Manager (CLA). The Fostering Team Manager will liaise with the Fostering SSW and the foster carer concerned on arrangements for recovery of the full amount.

Prompt arrangements for repayment should be formally agreed as soon as possible. A minimum of 25% of the carer's currently weekly payments will be deducted to recover any overpayments from the skills payment (Agreement to overpayment arrangements is included in the signed Foster Carer Agreement document following carer approval).

If a member of staff from carer payments disputes any payment requested, they should return the request to the person who approved the expenditure, together with an explanation of why it contravenes the guidance given. If the two parties cannot resolve the dispute, the case should be passed to a Senior Manager for a final decision.

An annual financial statement is sent to foster carers by Carer payments at the start of each financial year. The statement provides carers with details of all allowance and fee payments made to them during the previous financial year.

5.2. Equipment and furniture provision

It is expected that foster carers will provide a furnished, carpeted and curtained bedroom suitable for children/young people placed with them. The intention of the equipment and furniture budget is to support newly approved carers with initial set up costs for essential furniture and equipment. Agreement must be received from the fostering social worker prior to any equipment being purchased except in an emergency.

When a child moves to an adoptive placement or to an alternative fostering placement then carers must ensure that clothing and other personal belongings are placed in appropriate bags such as a suitcase or holdall.

These items are to be purchased from a child's allowance; the Fostering Service will not reimburse carers for these purchases. Many children move in a planned way therefore carers should set money aside each week from the allowance in order to buy suitable luggage.

5.3. Training for foster carers

Failure to attend nominated training that has been agreed with a carer's supervising social worker may lead to the carers being charged for the place unless there is a justifiable reason. A £50 Payment will be deducted from the carer's fee.

In exceptional circumstances the department will consider a loss of earning payment for attendance at mandatory training, equivalent to the pro rata skills based fee.

5.4. Start and end payments

A placement will be viewed as attracting a 1/7 fee plus 1/7 child's allowance both for the day of commencement and the day of termination of the placement.

5.5. Payments during introductory visits/reunification plans

During introductions to a foster placement and where an overnight stay is undertaken, payments will be made at the pro rata allowance.

If the child or young person is already placed with another foster carer then that carer will continue to be paid for up to two days at full rate for each absence. Any further absences of the young person to the prospective carers beyond two days will necessitate the allowance for the child ceasing, although the carers will continue to receive the appropriate remuneration. Payment ceases to the original carer when the permanent transfer takes place.

The same criteria apply when a child is away overnights during rehabilitation to the birth family.

5.6. Admission to hospital

Carers will receive the full child's allowance and fee. The allowance paid is to reimburse carers for visiting, taking gifts and meeting the child/young person's personal needs.

Foster carers will also continue to receive the skills-based element where the plan is for the child to return to the foster placement on discharge from hospital. If in the unfortunate event a child dies whilst in placement, the service will continue to pay the skills based payment for a further four weeks.

In other situations such as residential school Monday to Friday, the carer will receive a 1/7 of the child allowance plus a 1/7th of the skills based payment for each day the child is in the carer's home.

5.7. Support care services (please also refer to Support Care Foster Placements procedure)

Carers providing support care for children will receive a daily payment based on 1/7th of the basic fostering allowance and 1/7th of the skills based payment for the relevant group for which the carer has been assessed. Carers will receive the relevant daily amount for each 24-hour period or part of a 24-hour.

The allowance for the child is paid to the support care provider, and the fee of the carer using support care will not be affected, if it is part of the child's placement plan. It is important that the support care is part of the child's plan and is provided to assist the foster carer in maintaining the placement.

Support care is intended to support those placements where the carer(s) are:

- unable, or limited in their ability, to provide care for other children in the family of the family because of the care needed by the child:

- or where the provision of support care would enable a foster carer to provide more effective parenting and care.

It is important that the service monitors the level of support care requests in order to ensure the level of disruption to children is limited, and it will be monitored through the foster care review process. Where any concerns are being raised as to the frequency that children are being placed in support care, then a placement stability meeting will be held. The department reserves the right to withdraw the skills based payment from the main carer for the period of support care.

Requests for support care must be given in advance so that proper, assessment, planning and introductions can be made. (Please also refer to Support Care Foster Placements procedure)

Day Care support care is paid at child minding rate of £4.64 per hour and 50% of the carer's skill based payment.

Breaks Away placements

This is foster care provided to service users referred from the Disabled Children's Team. The level of care provided will be decided by the assessed needs of the child and the child's family. Support carers will be paid their assessed fee level for the number of days care provided. Fostering allowances will also be paid for the number of day's placement.

5.8. Disability living allowance (DLA)

There will be some children placed with foster carers who will meet the criteria for DLA. 16 plus is PIP. At the point of becoming looked after and being placed, both the statutory review and placement planning meeting should clarify matters relating to the child's DLA claim. If the DLA is being paid to a parent the claim should be transferred to the foster carer who will become a "Benefit Appointee" or to the Local Authority who will be the "Corporate Appointee"

At the initial placement planning meeting the SSW will assist the foster carer to make a claim for Disability Living Allowance, if not previously completed. The DLA is intended to meet the additional cost of caring for a disabled child/young person.

It is paid in addition to the weekly allowance and should be used to meet the child/young person's additional needs accruing from their disability. The foster carers should set up a bank account in their name for the specific purpose of managing the child's DLA and any other financial support and in order to provide an audit trail of income and expenditure.

DLA which is not spent on the needs of the child should be saved in the bank account for the child or a savings account (e.g. Junior ISA)

If the child/young person receives low or high rate DLA the carer may be eligible to claim Carer's allowance from the Benefits agency. There is only one claim paid, regardless of how many eligible people they care for and only one person can claim even if more than one person is providing care. Useful information can be found at www.gov.uk

5.9. Paid absence

Paid absence is available for foster carers to take in any one financial year period (April to March) to a maximum of 21 days. For newly approved carers and for those leaving the service, entitlement will be on a pro rata basis. Many carers will decide not to take a block and use the paid absence entitlement between placements. It is equivalent to the skills based payment and number of children approved for.

The voice and experience of children and young people who have been fostered informs our expectation of foster carers, and therefore we know it is detrimental to children if they are not included in their foster family's holiday. So we encourage you to do so.

5.10. Retainer fees

If the service puts a carer on hold for a new placement, carers will receive 50% of their skills based payment for a maximum of four weeks. An extension can be requested from the fostering team manager.

5.11 Adoption

During the transitional period between children being placed for adoption with their new family, costs incurred such as admission to activities and meals will only be reimbursed in exceptional circumstances and if agreed in advance at the planning meeting.

Foster carers will be entitled to a food allowance if away from home overnight as part of the introductions. Rates are per adult person.

Breakfast	£5.76
Lunch	£3.13
Evening meal	£9.82

5.12 Payments during investigations

Allegations of abuse made against foster carers are subject to safeguarding procedures, (see separate policy). Following a strategy meeting, in certain circumstances it may be appropriate for the foster child to remain in placement with their foster carers.

In cases where the children are moved from the foster home due to the nature of the allegations, or where a carer is suspended from caring for children whilst investigations are undertaken, a retainer may be payable. The payment will be authorised by the service manager.

The rate of the retainer is based on the skills based payment related to the number of children previously placed. The retainer will be paid until the investigation is concluded or for a 12-week period from the date of the strategy meeting, whichever occurs first.

If the investigation is not concluded within 12 weeks of the strategy meeting the rate paid will be reduced by 50% for up to 4 weeks or until the

conclusion of the investigation or termination of approval, whichever occurs first. Every effort will be made to ensure that there is no unnecessary delay in reviewing the approval of the foster carer.

Fee payments may be suspended immediately by the Service Manager (CLA) or Head of Service/Assistant Head of Service where there is clear supported evidence of and/or carer admission of serious malpractice.

5.13 Insurance

Foster carers must take out insurance to cover any damage to personal property or against loss. The Fostering Network can assist in identifying insurers who aim at specifically meeting your fostering household needs.

Carers are responsible for ensuring that their household and vehicles are insured appropriately. Proof of car insurance must be provided. All claims for damage and loss will be considered by the Service Manager on a case by case basis.

As self-employed individuals, carers should consider taking out sickness insurance in case of not being able to foster due to accident, injury or long term sickness.

5.14 Property Adaptations

The local authority is not in a position to fund property adaptations for foster carer households

5.15 General note

This document, although detailed, may not cover all possible situations. The Service Manager (CLA), Fostering and Head of Service are empowered to interpret and consider exceptional individual circumstances on a case by case basis, subject to the guiding principles on which the funding of foster care provision is based.

Exceptional decisions should always be supported with the written authority of the Head of Service, subject to review on an agreed date and recorded as an exceptional decision for the purposes of monitoring the effective application of this document.

6 SKILLS BASED PAYMENT SCHEME

6.12 Calderdale fostering service is committed to ensuring we have highly trained and skilled foster carers. Remuneration for carers is linked to the proven skills, experience and training/qualifications of the carer. The scheme recognises that fostering is an increasingly professional task and is therefore designed to encourage and reward continued professional development. Connected carers are able to participate in the Skills Based Payment Scheme subject to meeting the full criteria for each group.

The skills based payment is paid when there are children in placement or when the specific circumstances set out in the payments guidance are met.

1. Where the carer is taking paid absence.
2. When a placement is changing in a planned way.
3. As a retainer at the request of the fostering service.
4. During the early stages of an allegation investigation

We have four levels of payment for skills (PFS):

Group 1	Skills Payment	Allowance	Total
0- 1 years	-	£127	£127
1-4 years	-	£130	£130
5 -10 years	-	£143	£143
11 - 15 years	-	£164	£164
16 plus	-	£191	£191
Group 2	Skills Payment	Allowance	Total
0- 1 years	£138.74	£127	£264.74
1-4 years	£138.74	£130	£268.74
5 -10 years	£138.74	£143	£281.74
11 - 15 years	£138.74	£164	£302.74
16 plus	£138.74	£191	£329.74
Group 3	Skills Payment	Allowance	Total
0- 1 years	£277.76	£127	£404.76
1-4 years	£277.76	£130	£407.76
5 -10 years	£277.76	£143	£420.76
11 - 15 years	£277.76	£164	£441.76
16 plus	£277.76	£191	£468.76
Group 4 (ring-fence to 20 places)	Skills Payment	Allowance	Total

0- 1 years	£386.54	£127	£513.54
1-4 years	£386.54	£130	£516.54
5 -10 years	£386.54	£143	£529.54
11 - 15 years	£386.54	£164	£550.54
16 plus	£386.54	£191	£559.54

- 6.13 The Skills Based Payment Scheme applies to foster carers who care for children not previously known to them and to connected people who care for specific children who are previously known to them, subject to the carer meeting the criteria required for the relevant group payment.
- 6.14 The following sections set out the detailed criteria, which are used when undertaking skills based assessments. These will be based on evidence provided in the carer's own portfolio and by the fostering team's assessment.
- 6.15 The length of experience of fostering will be measured from the date of the first placement.
- 6.16 As both members of a couple are approved as foster carers and both are required to attend Skills to Foster training, it is preferable that both members of the couple undertake further training. This may not always be possible, so the fee level will be decided on the skills and training undertaken by the primary carer. Foster carer reviews may identify areas of training which one or both should attend.
- 6.17 Carers can progress through payment groups 2, 3 and 4 as they acquire the relevant skills, experience and qualifications. The number of carers in group 4 is ring fenced, as they are expected to take the higher need or older teenagers.
- 6.18 Any carer wishing to move to a higher group should notify their supervising social worker in writing with the evidence to support their application.
- 6.19 The supervising social worker will then undertake the skills based assessment using the criteria outlined in the payment guidance. This assessment will be completed within four weeks of receipt of the written request from the carer. If the applicant is successful the increase in payment will commence from the date of receipt of the written request from the carer.
- 6.20 In relation to groups 2 and 3 the fostering team manager will consider the assessment and recommendation by the supervising social worker for approval. Where applications are made for groups 4, the service

manager will also consider the assessment together with the fostering team manager and make a recommendation.

- 6.21 Where an application to progress through the payments scheme is not supported by the supervising social worker or relevant manager, the foster carer has the right to appeal this decision. Where appropriate this appeal will be considered by the service manager for applications for groups 2 and 3 and by representation to the assistant director safeguarding and vulnerable children for group 4
- 6.22 Foster carers who have previously been employed in registered/regulated (OFSTED) child care setting with direct responsibility for the day to day care of children with complex emotional and behavioural needs may accelerate through the skills based payment scheme if all the other relevant criteria for the group are met. This employment needs to have been for a minimum of two years and have ended no more than five years previous to the carer's registration of interest with this service.
- 6.23 The relevance of this experience must be reflected in the assessment and in the terms of subsequent approval; e.g. residential experience with teenagers may not be relevant to the task of caring for 0-4 yrs.
- 6.24 Foster carers who have previously been approved by a registered fostering agency and fostered children for a period of two years or more may accelerate through the skills based payment scheme if all the relevant criteria for the group applied for are met. This fostering experience will need to have ended no more than five years previous to the carer's registration of interest with this service.
- 6.25 Foster carers who have previously worked in residential child care with a registered agency for a period of two years or more may accelerate through the skill based payment scheme if all the relevant criteria for the group applied for are met. This work experience will need to have ended no more than five years previous to the carer's registration of interest with this service.
- 6.26 Calderdale Fostering Service will reserve the right to move a foster carer to a lower group where the foster carer is considered responsible for not continuing to meet the requirements of their group. Examples of this may include non-attendance at training/development events identified through supervision, ceasing to contribute to the fostering services as identified in their skills based assessment, attending the TCI refresher or paediatric first aid, or concerns about meeting the emotional needs of children looked after.
- 6.27 Failure to complete the TSD standards within the required timescales without reasonable cause will jeopardise continuing approval as a foster carer.

6.28 On the rare occasion where this action may be considered, any concerns will be raised and recorded in supervision with the foster carer and subsequently in the foster carers' annual review. This review can be 'brought forward' if appropriate. The foster carer has the right to appeal this decision by representation at foster panel through the foster panel procedures.

7. Skills Based Payment Scheme – The Criteria

Group 1 Carers [age related basic allowances]

These include:

- Foster carers caring for children not previously known to them who have attended skills to foster training, successfully completed a full assessment, and have been approved by the fostering panel and the agency decision maker and who have less than six months experience of fostering.
- Family and friends carers who are caring for a specific child who is previously known to them and are in the process of completing a full assessment.
- All foster carers who do not wish to progress further through the skills based scheme.

The following are the minimum criteria for Group 1 carers:

- ✓ Successful completion of skills to foster training
- ✓ Attendance at support groups
- ✓ Pre -approval assessment portfolio
- ✓ Foster carers who have undertaken any training specified at the point of approval or subsequently through supervision, or annual review, which is identified as necessary by the supervising social worker.
- ✓ Foster carers who continue to demonstrate the following minimum skills in relation to the TSD standards:
 - Understand the principles and values essential for fostering children and young people
 - Understand their role as a foster carer
 - Understand health and safety, and healthy care
 - Know how to communicate effectively
 - Understand the development of children and young people
 - Keep children and young people safe from harm
 - Develop themselves as a foster carer

Group 2 Carers

These include:

Foster carers with more than six months recent experience of working with other people's children, either as a foster carer or in another professional capacity, and have completed the skills to foster training.'

The following are the minimum criteria for Group 2 carers:

- ✓ Foster carers who have demonstrated evidence of competency in each of the basic standards for Group 1 carers.
- ✓ On target to complete the TSD Standards workbook and mandatory training within 12 months of approval.
- ✓ Support carers and connected carers will be expected to have completed the workbook and mandatory training within 18 months of approval.
- ✓ Foster carers who have undertaken any training specified at the point of approval or subsequently through supervision or annual review which is identified as necessary by the supervising social worker

Mandatory training:

- a) Safe guarding
- b) Safer caring
- b) Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for family care givers (3 day course)
- c) Attachment
- d) First Aid
- e) Educational needs of children looked after
- f) Supporting Teenagers*

**only mandatory for those likely to care for teenagers*

To remain eligible for Level 2, all foster carers must complete the mandatory Therapeutic Crisis Intervention refresher training and the First Aid training course on a 3 yearly basis, in order to refresh their skills and knowledge in these key subject areas. Any foster carer who does not meet these training requirements will revert to Level 1 payments until all the training is completed.

Group 3 carers

These include:

- Foster carers who meet all the relevant criteria for Group 2 carers and who, in addition, have a minimum of two years of fostering or residential experience and who also meet the other criteria for Group 3 carers:
 - ✓ Foster carers who are able to evidence their skills and capabilities against the TSD standards
 - ✓ Foster carers who have successfully completed all elements of the mandatory training programme
 - ✓ Foster carers who have undertaken any training specified at the point of approval or subsequently through supervision, performance appraisal or annual review which is identified as necessary by the supervising social worker
 - ✓ Foster carers who have completed satisfactory annual reviews
 - ✓ Have NVQ Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People/QCF Level 3 Diploma or equivalent.

- ✓ Four out of 7 Kate Cairns specialist training units as agreed with SSW, training coordinator and specified in the carers PDP.
- ✓ Work commitments that do not impact on the needs of the child looked after and the ability to prioritise the fostering task
- ✓ To be able to evidence the ability to care for a child or young person with risky or challenging behaviour
- ✓ Foster carers who have and can provide evidence of the following six key skills in addition to those required for Group 1 and 2 carers:
 - An ability to help children and families cope with loss and bereavement – this may be because of life threatening illness, separation through adoption, or loss of their family
 - An ability to work closely with other professionals in carrying out individual therapeutic programmes, skills development, behaviour modification or educational programmes with children with appropriate supervision and consultation
 - An ability to work closely with other professionals, sharing information, exchanging skills, and working under the guidance of, or in collaboration with, other professionals involved with the child
 - An ability and willingness to assist with the recruitment of other foster carers
 - An ability and willingness to assist with the training of other foster carers
 - An ability and willingness to act as a formal mentor to other foster carers

There is no expectation that carers would undertake all these tasks at the same time. They will however, need to demonstrate their ability to undertake them and be available and willing to do so depending on the demands of individual placements. This approach allows some carers to take on responsibilities for a supportive role in relation to other carers whilst some may choose to further develop their childcare skills.

If the fostering service is not using a particular carer's skills this does not signify that the carer should lose the Group 3 payment. **It is the agency's responsibility to use carer's skills appropriately.**

Group 4 (Ring-fenced to 20 places per year)

These include:

- ✓ Foster carers who, in addition to meeting the criteria for Group 3 carers, have also successfully completed an NVQ Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People or equivalent, or QCF Level 3 Diploma. This may include carers with other relevant professional qualifications in working with children and young people e.g. in social work, childcare, teaching or youth work and who also meet the other criteria for Group 4 carers. Where qualifications other than NVQ 3 in Child Care or QCF Level 3 Diploma are considered the applicant needs to provide a copy of their certificate and details of the course content to evidence the equivalent status of the qualification. The fostering team manager together with the service manager will consider the relevance of this qualification.
- ✓ Foster carers who do not fall into the above criteria but who have successfully completed 7 of the specialist level 3 or 4 Kate Cairns training units

- ✓ An ability to care for children assessed as presenting behaviour which causes significant management problems
- ✓ Maintain an awareness and knowledge of current legislation and current issues in child care and good practice
- ✓ Offer placements for young people over 12, or where there is a likelihood of placement instability because of the child/ young person's needs and or previous care history
- ✓ An ability to offer the eight key skills:
 - To help children and families cope with loss and bereavement – this may be because of life threatening illness, separation through adoption, or loss of their family
 - To work closely with other professionals in carrying out individual therapeutic programmes, skills development, behaviour modification or educational programmes with children with appropriate supervision and consultation
 - An ability to take responsibility for individual programmes of skills development for children and work with them and their parents and other professionals to achieve the goals of the programme
 - Where appropriate, to work alongside professional colleagues to prevent the removal of children from their home environment
 - An ability and willingness to supervise those contact visits where it is not deemed desirable for contact to occur without a third party and where it cannot happen in the child's current placement
 - An ability and willingness to assist with the recruitment of other foster carers
 - An ability and willingness to assist with the training of other foster carers
 - An ability and willingness to act as a formal mentor to other foster carers

There is no expectation that carers would undertake all these tasks at the same time. They will however, need to demonstrate their ability to undertake them and be available and willing to do so depending on the demands of individual placements. This approach allows some carers to take on responsibilities for a supportive role in relation to other carers whilst some may choose to further develop their childcare skills.

If the fostering service is not using a particular carer's skills this does not signify that the carer should lose the Group 4 payment. It is the agency's responsibility to use carer's skills appropriately.

Additional Notes

It is expected that Group 4 carers will be available to the child for most of the time. Work outside the home would usually be limited to no more than 20 hours per week as long as this has been discussed with the supervising social worker and agreed by the fostering team manager or service manager. This must be compatible with the fostering task and the needs of the child/children in placement.

Skills Based Payments – by Group

Group 1	Skills Payment	Allowance - £	Total - £
0 – 1yrs		127.00	127.00
1 – 4yrs		130.00	130.00
5 – 10yrs		143.00	143.00
11 – 15yrs		164.00	164.00
16+yrs		191.00	191.00

Group 2	Skills Payment	Allowance - £	Total - £
0 – 1yrs	138.74	127.00	265.74
1-4yrs	138.74	130.00	268.74
5 – 10yrs	138.74	143.00	281.74
11 – 15yrs	138.74	164.00	302.74
16+yrs	138.74	191.00	329.74

Group 3	Skills Payment	Allowance - £	Total - £
0 – 1yrs	277.76	127.00	404.76
1-4yrs	277.76	130.00	407.76
5 – 10yrs	277.76	143.00	420.76
11 – 15yrs	277.76	164.00	441.76
16+yrs	277.76	191.00	468.76

Group 4	Skills Payment	Allowance - £	Total - £
0 – 1yrs	386.54	127.00	513.54
1-4yrs	386.54	130.00	516.54
5 – 10yrs	386.54	143.00	529.54
11 – 15yrs	386.54	164.00	550.54
16+yrs	386.54	191.00	577.54

EQUIPMENT LIST

For specialist provision please consult with your supervising Social Worker

ITEM	MAXIMUM CLAIMABLE
Moses Basket	£30.00
Cot and mattress	£120.00
Changing mat	£10.00
Sterilizer	£20.00
Baby bath	£15.00
Buggy/Pram	£100.00
Double Buggy/Pram	£150.00
Car Seat	£65.00
Set of Drawers	£80.00
Bouncy Chair	£25.00
Play Mat	£25.00
Stair gate (s)	£25.00
Monitor	£40.00
High Chair	£40.00
Fire guard	£20.00
Bed	£100.00
Bunk bed	£200.00
Bed Rail	£20.00
Mattress	£80.00
Bed protector	£20.00
Wardrobe	£100.00
Desk	£50.00
Duvet & pillows	£30.00