**POLICY & PRACTICE GUIDANCE FOR FOSTERING FEE PAYMENTS:**

Purpose:

The policy and practice guidance has been developed to provide clarity around Sandwell Childrens Trust additional fostering payments and to support improved practice.

Foster carer fee payments are made on top of child fostering payments to recognise a foster carer’s time, skills, and experience. The fee payment document and progression document provide further detail on the skill level payments, and the foster carer progression criteria.

This guidance does make any changes to the amounts paid in fostering payments. The fostering fees and allowances are agreed separate to this guidance.

All foster carers receive a weekly child fostering allowance when they have a child living with them, which is designed to cover the cost of caring for a child in foster care.

This guidance outlines how the child allowance should be spent, how birthday, festival, recruitment and retention payment for mainstream foster carers initial clothing, and child holiday allowances are paid.

**Child Maintenance Payments should be used as follows:**

32% Food

25% Household

10% Personal

26% Clothing

7% Transport

**Birthday & Festival Allowances:**

Children are provided with birthday, and festival allowances and these are paid automatically each year.

**Recruitment and Retention Payment – Mainstream Foster Carers:**

Mainstream foster carers receive an additional 2-week fee payment that is paid annually. This is to support the recruitment and retention of carers who are caring for non-related children.

This is paid to mainstream foster carers who have provided a foster home for a child/ren in the previous 3 months and are continuing to provide a foster home in the forthcoming year.

**Initial Clothing Allowance:**

Children placed for the first time with no suitable clothing, or no clothing may be entitled to an initial clothing grant. If this is agreed, it may be paid in two halves.

The first payment at the point of placement.

A second payment may be made after the Child in Care review.

This allows for those children who may be in a foster home for a couple of days to have the clothing that they need for this initial period. Should the child remain being cared for by Sandwell Children Trust Fostering Service a second payment will be made after the first review.

Initial clothing allowance payments are made based on need, paid upon request, and agreed by the fostering social worker and manager.

The child’s Independent Reviewing Officer should provide additional oversight around how the child’s needs are being met within the foster home.

**Child Holiday Payments:**

Children are provided with a holiday payment each year. The holiday payment is made based on the carer taking the child on holiday or providing day trips as a foster family (outside of school trips) that have a cost implication.

This payment may be used for children to experience educational trips that have a significant cost implication. These trips should be funded in the first instance through the educational payments that can be accessed (PEP) and/or contribution from the child’s social work team.

Child holiday payments are made upon request and must be agreed by the fostering social worker and manager.

The child’s Independent Reviewing Officer should provide additional oversight around how the child’s needs are being met within the foster home.

**How to apply for the initial clothing allowance and child holiday payments:**

Foster carer contacts their fostering social worker and requests a payment

Foster carer provides evidence to the fostering social worker on the expenditure

Fostering social worker forwards the request to their team manager for approval

**Agreed**  **Not Agreed**

Team manager forwards to finance for payment Team manager notifies fostering social worker with rationale

 Fostering social worker notifies foster carer