



Business Support Information for Staff Joining The Fostering Service

Welcome to the Team

I am writing to introduce ourselves to you as Business Support service and to let you know the part we play in setting up new carers for payment and producing the vacancy report which is used to assist in the matching of children referred and foster homes.

You also have an important part to play in this along with the carers themselves which is why I have attached to this memo a copy of the 'introduction to new carers' letter that we send out to new carers as part of the set up process, so that you will be aware of what carers are being told regarding these two areas.

Setting up of New Carers

We set up new carers bank details from a BACs form that they complete. It takes a few days for the Trusts financial processes to add their details to our automated bank runs. Once this has been completed and we have had the set-up information via ECLIPSE (see page 10 of the *Eclipse Reference Guide* supplied by Hamant Jakhu, **Lead for Fostering Performance Data & Service Development**), for the process we should be up and running and able to make payments direct to the carers bank account each week.

Payment Timing

Birmingham Childrens Trust makes payments a week in arrears on Fridays (unless there is a bank holiday). This means that each Friday the bank accounts will be credited with the payment due for the week ending the previous Saturday.

A carers first payment will usually be an equipment set up grant to enable them to purchase whatever they need to make the home ready for placements e.g. furniture, pushchair, car seat etc,

This will be followed by their carer fee from the date they become available to take placement of a child or young person, and this will coincide with their availability details being placed on the Vacancy Report (VR – see below).

Maintenance for the child or young person in question will commence once we have been informed that they have had a child placed this **is where we require carers to keep us informed in order to keep payments accurate and on time.**

Notification of Placement or Discharge

It is essential that carers let us know by telephoning 0121 303 5313 that they have either taken a placement of a child/young person or a child/young person has left their home.

This information is then entered into our payments system. The payment is then processed to arrive in the bank account on the next available payment run.

We have a weekly cut-off (on Thursdays) and need **everything** for that week with us by Wednesday. These items then reach the banks 8 days after the Thursday cut-off (this is the week in arrears that I mentioned earlier).

Any delay in notifying this information causes a delay in payments being updated and can lead to over or under payments. We want this to be avoided wherever possible. Therefore, we urge carers to let us know as soon as possible after a placement or discharge of a foster child.

That takes care of the fees and maintenance allowances (which include birthday and religious festival elements).

Other Expenses and Allowances

Should carers incur other expenses e.g. bus fares, mileage, school photographs, there may be special activity costs such as swimming lessons or brownies/cubs, and they can claim reimbursement. As Supervising Social Worker, you will be able to supply expenses claims forms that carers can complete and submit. Receipts will be required in most circumstances and carers should claim reimbursement within 3 months of incurring the expenditure. Completed expense claim forms need to be verified and signed by you and submitted to your TM for authority for the expenditure. These can then be placed in our work trays.

There are also some predetermined allowances that carers can use in respect of a foster child e.g. initial clothing, school uniform, child holiday allowance to facilitate a holiday or cover holiday activity expenses, carers can claim these with your assistance.

I have attached to this document a comprehensive list of the payment types and current rates that are available to carers depending upon the terms of their approval. There is also a 'General information on payments to carers' document for your

information which answers some frequently asked questions and helps dispel some urban myths around payments.

Remittance Advice Slips

Carers are sent a remittance advice slip each week they are in receipt of payment. They should make sure that they keep these advice slips and the end of year tax statement as they will need them when it comes to completing their tax return for HMRC as self employed

Changes to Carer Personal Details

Any changes to personal details such as name change, address change, bank account change must be communicated to us in writing directly from the carer themselves (either in a letter or an email from their personal email address). These details cannot be changed if the notification comes from a third part (including yourself as Supervising Social Worker), this is for reasons of security, both financial and personal.

Vacancy Report

In addition to carer payments we also produce the Vacancy Report or VR every day, it is a list of available carers and their approval details.

This list is used by the placement teams when they are looking to match a child with a foster carer and so for this reason the accuracy of it is vital and it is directly affected by how quickly we are informed that a child has either been placed in or has left a foster home, in other words, whether carers are available to take a placement or not.

It is a live report produced from the payments systems matching approved numbers with current occupancy to determine whether there is an available vacancy.

Available Vacancies

If you have a carer with a vacancy that vacancy will be reported on the VR (as long as we are aware of it) unless there is 'block' or unavailable situation. The guidance notes referred to earlier contain the process for notifying a 'block' or unavailable situation (pages 7 to 9) and these notifications come to us via Eclipse once you have completed and submitted it via your TM. Whether payment during a 'block' is appropriate or not is covered in the general information and FAQ document.

I hope that you will find this information useful, but if you need clarification of anything relating to carer payments, the process or VR please either come and talk to us or email us.

Ex-Gratia payments/Transfer in Carers (Payment Arrangements)

Advance notice must be given to finance to ensure they are able to set up payments consistent with the taxation rules for carers and carers are paid in time.

Carer Payment Audits

Carer Payment audits must take place every 8 weeks. Carer Payment Remittance slip will be put in the Supervising Social Workers pigeon hole and they are expected to discuss with the carer in supervision and sign and date the form – returning to finance. Audits are returned back to Finance.

Overpayments

This is in the Foster Carer Agreement – refer to this for more detail.

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