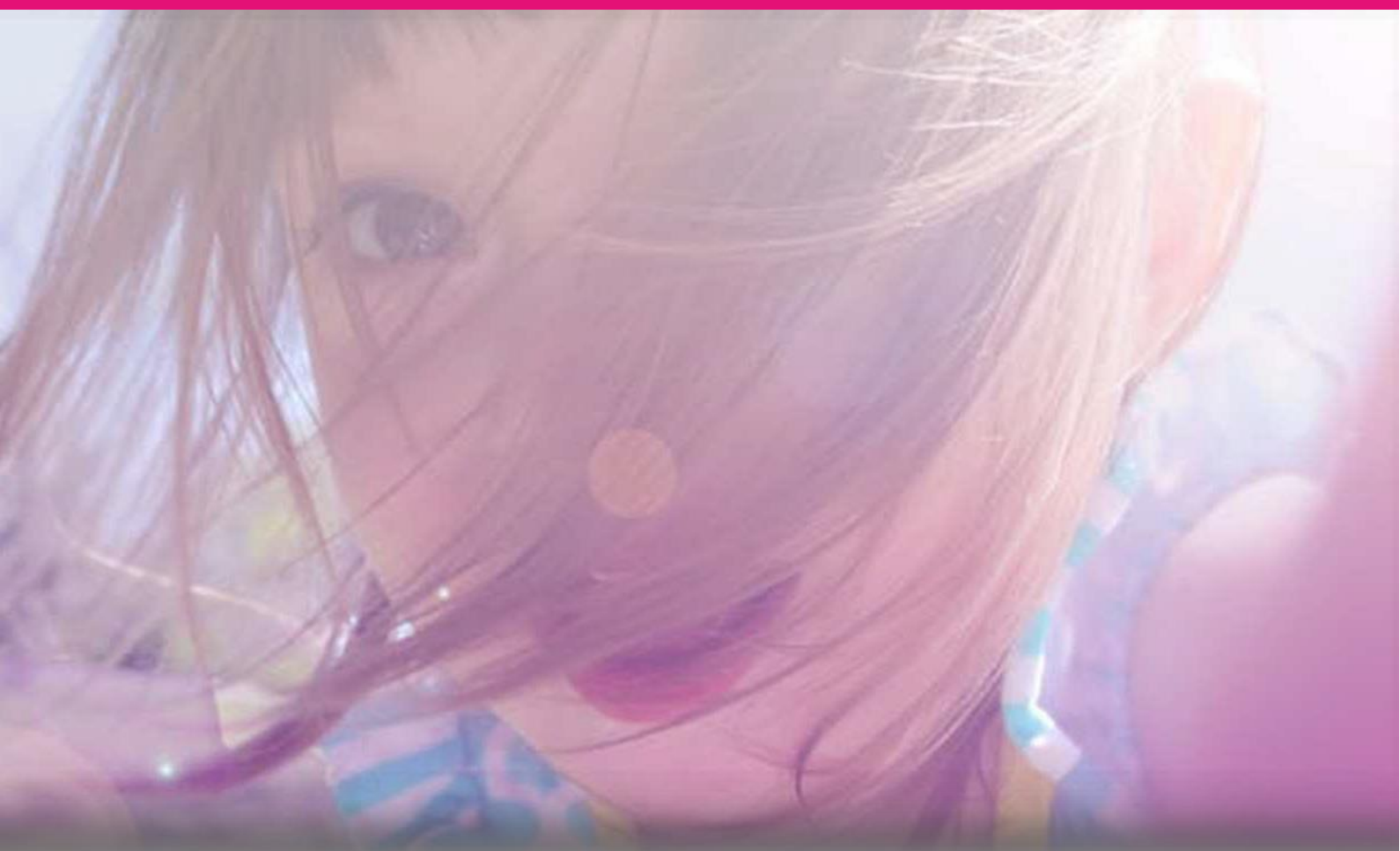


STOKE-ON-TRENT FOSTERING



Guide to Fostering
Allowances (2021/2022)

INTRODUCTION	3
ADMINISTRATION OF ALLOWANCES	3
Timing of payments	
Child benefit is not payable to foster carers who are in receipt of a weekly fostering allowance.	
Responsibilities of the Child/Young Person's Social Work Team	
Responsibilities of the Supervising Social Worker	
Responsibilities of the Foster Carer	
NON-DISCRETIONARY PAYMENTS	4
Weekly Maintenance Allowances	
Expenditure covered by the weekly maintenance allowance	
Holidays & Holiday Allowances	
Birthday Allowances	
Religious Festival / Christmas Allowances	
Mileage/Travel Rates	
Initial 'Set Up' Payments	
DISCRETIONARY PAYMENTS	6
Initial Clothing Allowance	
School Uniform Allowance	
School / Educational trips	
Pocket Money & Short Term Savings	
Long Term Savings	
Encouraging Talents and Abilities	
Glasses or Contact Lenses	
Child care expenses	
Adoption Introductions	
Insurance	
Children with Disabilities	
Young people in employment	
SPECIAL PAYMENT SCHEMES	9
Short Breaks (previously 'Family Link') or Remand	
Planned Respite (General)	
Tax Payments	
Financial Record Keeping	
ADDITIONAL PAYMENTS	11
Recruitment payments ('refer a friend fee')	
Training Payments	
Long service retention payments	
Loans/Grants	
Resolution of difficulties	
FOSTERING ALLOWANCES PAYROLL DATES (2021)	12

1 Introduction

- 1.0 This document sets out the allowances paid to all foster carers approved by Stoke-on-Trent Fostering Service for 2020/2021, to help toward covering the costs involved in caring for children and young people placed with them.
- 1.1 A copy of this guidance will be sent electronically (or as a hard copy if requested) to every approved foster carer whenever a change in its content occurs.

2 Administration of Allowances

Timing of payments

- 2.0 Each payment period runs fortnightly from Monday to Sunday. Remittance advice ('payment slips') received on a Friday/Saturday will be in respect of the fortnight ending that Sunday. A list of the payment dates are attached (see Appendix 1 – Payroll dates).
- 2.1 Payments are made by BACS (Automated Payments). BACS payments allow for personal withdrawals of cash from the Friday.
- 2.2 Allowances will continue to be paid when a child/young person has an unplanned absence from placement for 3 days or less. There will be a deduction from this allowance however, when the absence is pre-arranged.

Child benefit is not payable to foster carers who are in receipt of a weekly fostering allowance.

- 2.3 Fostering allowances will not be paid to more than one foster carer at a time when a child/young person is receiving respite elsewhere. Payment to the permanent/full time carer will continue to the day the child/young person leaves and recommence on the day the child/young person returns.
- 2.4 Payments to the respite foster carer will be made from the day the child/young person arrives and finish on the day the child/young person leaves.

Responsibilities of the Child/Young Person's Social Work Team

- 2.5 The child's social worker is responsible for notifying the payments team as soon as a placement is made, a placement ends or a child/young person moves to another foster carer.

Responsibilities of the Supervising Social Worker

- 2.6 The supervising social worker will provide advice and consultation to the foster carer regarding the use of allowances to meet the needs of any child/young person placed with them. It is the responsibility of the supervising social worker to ensure that the carer is spending the allowance appropriately. It is also the responsibility of the supervising social worker to notify the finance team of any additional payments due to the carer(s) (See section 6.2).

Responsibilities of the Foster Carer

- 2.7 The foster carer must notify their supervising social worker immediately if payments continue after a placement has ended. The foster carer must then make arrangements to repay any overpayment amount with the finance team. If there are no continuing payments due to the foster carer, from which an overpayment could be deducted or recouped, the foster carer must make alternative suitable arrangements to ensure the amount is repaid in full.
- 2.8 It is the responsibility of the foster carer to budget for the child/young person's needs and to exercise their discretion in making day to day decisions about expenditure. The foster carer will consult with other parties, namely the child/young person, their parents, child/young person's social worker and the supervising social worker with regards to expenditure. This consultation will take place at the placement planning meeting and will be reviewed on a regular basis based on the individual child's needs and care plan.
- 2.9 It is the responsibility of the foster carer to use the weekly allowance to make adequate provision for events, activities and occasions in the life of the child/young person as outlined in paragraph 4.0 'Expenditure covered by the weekly maintenance allowance'. This includes funding the transport to and from events, activities and occasions unless otherwise agreed by a fostering manager.

3 Non-Discretionary Payments

Weekly Maintenance Allowances:

<u>Age</u>	<u>Weekly Rate</u>
0 – 2 years old	£134.05
3 – 4 years old	£138.04
5 – 10 years old	£152.04
11 – 15 years old	£183.33
16 + years old	£222.95

Expenditure covered by the weekly maintenance allowance:

- Food (including food appropriate to the child/young person's culture and religion plus any special dietary needs)
- School lunch/dinner money
- Clothing and Shoes (including new clothes for parties or religious festivals e.g. birthdays, Diwali, Eid, Christmas or Easter)
- Youth club fees and clothing or uniform required (e.g. scouts or guides)
- Nappies
- Self-care (e.g. deodorants, sanitary towels, haircuts and hair products etc.)
- Suitcases and 'Holdalls' (It is not acceptable to transport a child's belongs in plastic bags. Foster Carers moving a child on should always ensure a suitcase or holdall is provided for them)
- Pocket money (please note the Stoke-on-Trent Pocket Money Policy)
- Savings
- Toys/books/games or equipment
- All sporting activity fees and equipment costs (except those played at school which are covered by the school uniform allowance)
- Hobbies and interests (e.g. music, dance)
- Subscription to magazines, comics or other clubs.

- Treats/outings (including school day trips)
- Presents for child/young person's friends
- Playschool/nursery fees
- Approved child minders
- Household costs (e.g. additional gas and electric, wear and tear of furniture, carpets, TV, washing machine, telephone use etc.)
- Expenses incurred in maintaining contact with the child/young person's parents and siblings, where contact is hosted in the foster placement.
- Replacement equipment – bedding, bed sheets, towels, waterproof sheets, beds, cots, bedroom furniture, baby equipment (Please see under initial set up money).
- Travel, involving journeys specifically resulting from the fostering task, other than those journeys that would fall under the category of 'normal family life'¹.

Holidays & Holiday Allowances

- 3.1 A payment of two week's additional fostering allowance, based on age bands, will be made automatically for each child/young person early in June each year. If a child is placed after this date, a discretionary payment can be triggered by the Fostering Service Manager. If a child moves after this date and the child has not been taken on holiday, therefore the allowance would not have been used, it will be expected that foster carers make arrangements to repay the amount in full.
- 3.2 *Nb. Holidays for fostered children should not be booked in school term time. If there are exceptional reasons why a fostered child might require a holiday in the school term, permission must be obtained from the child's social worker's Service Manager, the Virtual Head Teacher and the school Head Teacher before any bookings are made. It is unusual for permission to be given and fines or prosecution could result from taking a child out of school without authorisation.*

Birthday Allowances –

- 3.3 One week's additional allowance, based on age, will be paid automatically prior to the period in which the child/young person's birthday falls. This payment is made to enhance the child's birthday experience i.e. through celebrations and presents. Foster carers may be asked to give evidence of how this money has been allocated.

Religious Festival / Christmas Allowances

- 3.4 One week's additional allowance, based on age, will be paid early in December or can be triggered where appropriate depending on the child's religious and cultural needs (i.e. in recognition of other religious festivals that they may celebrate). Where a child celebrates a festival other than Christmas, this should be identified and agreed at the placement agreement meeting.

¹ 'Normal family life' is interpreted to mean journeys that would usually occur (outside of school runs) as part of the day to day task of looking after a child. For example, food/clothes shopping, outings, taking to a friend's house, collect from clubs or activities. These are not tasks that can be claimed for as mileage. Travel that can be claimed for would include, but is not limited to, journeys undertaken to attend meetings, reviews, medicals, contact sessions, court and travel to and from local schools.

Mileage/Travel Rates

- 3.5 After the first 10 miles per day, per household, foster carers can claim additional mileage at a rate of 50p per mile up to 50 miles, any mileage thereafter will be at a rate of 18p per mile.
- 3.6 If travelling by bus, after the first £4.50 per day, foster carers can claim for their own journey's relating to the fostering task. A child's bus fares can also be claimed in this way.
- 3.7 Travel costs should be claimed on the Travel Expenses Claim Form which must be approved by a fostering manager (See Appendix B – Travel Expenses Claim Form). All mileage claims must include the postcodes travelled to and from and state a clear reason for the journey.

Initial 'Set Up' Payments

- 3.8 At the point of an initial placement following approval as a foster carer, households approved to care for babies between 0 to 2 years old will be given a payment of up to £750 depending on their "set up costs". Households approved for to care for children aged 3 years old and above will be given a payment of up to £500 depending on their set up costs.
- 3.9 In some exceptional cases requests for additional set up payments will be considered by the Fostering Service; for example, where a change in age of an approval occurs. Any such requests must be made via the fostering social worker to a fostering manager. Proof of receipt may be required where agreement has been given to reimburse the costs associated with the purchase of equipment.
- 3.10 Once initial set up payments have been made, foster carers will be required to budget for the replacement and maintenance costs of equipment and furniture (due to general wear and tear) from their weekly allowance unless there are exceptional circumstances. If foster carers believe they have an exceptional circumstance, they must discuss this with their supervising social worker in the first instance, who will then present the matter to a fostering manager for consideration.

4 Discretionary Payments²

Initial Clothing Allowance

- 4.0 An additional allowance may be paid at the beginning of a placement if the child/young person arrives with little or no adequate clothing, or it has been impossible to collect clothing from the child/young person's previous home. This allowance will only cover the immediate needs of the child as other items of clothing should be budgeted for from within the fostering allowance.

School Uniform Allowance

- 4.1 A payment of up to £100 can be made to cover the costs of purchasing uniform for a child starting school for the first time. Up to £150 can be paid for children transferring from a primary to a secondary school. Supervising social workers will need to request this payment on behalf of the foster carer. Receipts will be required.

² **Nb.** As the payments listed here are discretionary and depend on the individual needs of the child, foster carers must obtain agreement from a fostering manager, prior to expenses being incurred. Foster carers may be required to provide receipts as evidence of how any discretionary payment have been spent.

- 4.2 It is expected that the weekly allowance should cover replacement clothing, including school uniform. However, if a child moves into a new placement and arrives without sufficient uniform, or has to move school as a result of that new placement, a payment will be considered.

School / Educational trips

- 4.3 Day Trips/Outings/Trips abroad should be budgeted for from the weekly allowance paid. However, where there is an exceptional trip of significant expense, foster carers may request support to help meet the cost of the trip. This should be discussed well in advance with the supervising social worker, who will in turn present the request to the Fostering Service Manager for a decision.

Pocket Money & Short Term Savings

- 4.4 Pocket money can be a contentious issue for foster carers and looked after children alike. Often there are different views about how much should be given and how it should be spent or saved. However, the principle and practice of providing children and young people with a small amount of pocket money, on a weekly or monthly basis, provides them with the opportunity to learn to handle money responsibly and appreciate its value.
- 4.5 Stoke on Trent Fostering Services have taken the decision to re-introduce guidance to foster carers regarding pocket money for fostered children/young people. A full policy is available from the fostering website (www.stoke.gov.uk/fostering) or from a fostering social worker upon request.
- 4.6 The following (see over) are minimum amounts of pocket money expected to be paid from the Fostering Allowances, though we understand that some foster carers may wish to pay more pocket money for their children and young people.

4.7 **Age Amount (per week)**

0-4	£2.00 (to be saved)
5-10	£3.00
11-15	£4.50
16+	£10.00

Long Term Savings (*NEW*)

- 4.8 A complaint raised by several young people leaving care today is that they have little by way of savings to help in their transition to independent living.
- 4.9 As of this financial year, foster carers will now be required to steward financial contributions from their children's fostering allowance, into long term savings accounts or Trust Funds. Foster carers can choose to make these contributions on a fortnightly or monthly basis, and will be required to account for amounts deposited via supervision or children's reviews.
- 4.10 For most fostered children, contributions will be made via a Junior Independent Savings Account (Junior ISA) provided for by the Share Foundation. However, for older children who have been in care for a longer period of time, this may be via a child trust fund (CTF).
- 4.11 Information about Junior Independent Savings Accounts can be found via www.sharefound.org who administers the accounts for fostered children after they have been in care for 12 months.

- 4.12 Information about Child Trust Funds (for children looked after before 2014) can be found via <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-trust-fund-looked-after-children>
- 4.13 Account details for your children can be obtained via the social workers involved with you, who will make enquiries on your behalf via the city council's business support team.
- 4.14 Minimum amounts to be deposited are advised as:

<u>Age</u>	<u>Fortnightly / Monthly</u>	
0 – 4 years old	£3.50	£7.00
5 – 10 years old	£4.00	£8.00
11 – 15 years old	£5.00	£10.00
16 + years old	£6.00	£12.00

Encouraging Talents and Abilities

- 4.15 Usual out of school activities will be funded from the fostering allowances. However where a child or young person has an exceptional talent or ability e.g. sporting or musical skills, a request can be made for additional funding to the Fostering Team Service Manager. Alternatively, funding could be used from the child's personal education allowance. This must be discussed and agreed with the child's social worker first.

Glasses or Contact Lenses

- 4.16 In the case of a child who requires glasses or contact lenses, an additional payment of up to £100 can be claimed once per year. Any additional costs (e.g. insurances, repairs & cleaning fluids) must be met from the weekly allowance. Children who require glasses or contact lenses must be seen by a qualified optometrist and purchases made through a recognised opticians.

Child care expenses

- 4.17 A basic expectation of a foster carer's approval is to attend meetings, consultations and reviews concerning the child placed with them, whilst balancing their own family or childminding responsibilities. For this reason foster carers are encouraged to build up a significant network of support, with DBS checks undertaken for adults who may be asked to provide alternative child care. In exceptional circumstances where all alternative options have been exhausted including any mutual arrangements with other foster carers and any after school or youth club provision, consideration may be given to reimbursing the costs associated with accessing approved child minding, nursery provision, or holiday clubs. This must be discussed and agreed in advance of any provision being accessed.

Adoption Introductions

- 4.18 When foster carers provide hospitality in their own home as part of adoption introductions, they can claim a hospitality payment of up to £9 per day, up to a maximum of £45 per week. If they are expected to travel to support an introduction, mileage or travel expenses can be claimed for. If further expenses are likely, for example an overnight stay, permission must be sought from a fostering manager beforehand.

Insurance

- 4.19 It is the responsibility of the carer to advise their home and contents insurers that they are fostering. Foster carers needing to make a claim because of loss or damage caused by a foster child should immediately check with their own insurance company whether the company will cover the cost of the claim.
- 4.20 If the carer's own insurance provider provides written confirmation that they will not cover

the cost of the claim, the foster carer should provide the supervising social worker with written details of the damage/losses incurred, including the circumstances surrounding this and any quotes obtained to remedy the situation. The supervising social worker will then present the matter to a fostering manager who will give consideration to awarding costs³.

- 4.21 Where a claim is made through a foster carer's own insurance policy, Stoke-on-Trent City Council will pay the excess incurred up to a value of £200.

Children with Disabilities

- 4.22 If a child/young person has special needs, any entitlement to benefits (e.g. Disability Living Allowance) will not affect the weekly fostering allowance. Where foster carers receive DLA or any other additional benefits for a child in their care, they may be asked to give account of how these payments are being spent, including proof.

Young people in employment

- 4.23 Where a child ceases full time education or commences employment, a placement agreement meeting must be arranged to discuss expenditure.
- 4.24 Young people aged 16 and over who are not in employment and education may be entitled to claim additional benefits that could impact on household allowances and income.

5 Special Payment Schemes

Short Breaks (previously Family Link) or Remand

- 5.0 The weekly rate for foster carers approved to provide care under either of these schemes will be £496.44. Where a child is placed for longer than a week (7 days), a payment of £273.51 will be made per additional week, plus the maintenance allowance for the child in consideration of their age.
- 5.1 Where a foster carer provides care for under these schemes for less than a week, but more than 4 hours, rates will be paid at £70.92, per 24 period, per child. Where a period of care lasts for more than 24 hours, a foster carer will only qualify for an additional payment of £70.92 per child, when the child has been in care for more than 4 additional hours (or 28 hours in total). Claims must be made via the supervising social worker on the form attached (appendix 3).

Planned Respite (General)

- 5.2 Where foster carers are requested to undertake planned respite for a child for more than 4 hours, but less than the duration of the fortnightly payment period, the foster carer will be paid a rate equivalent to the fostering allowance for the child's age band, per 24 hour period they undertake the respite for. Where a foster carer would usually receive a skills level payment, this too will also be applied at a rate per day, adjusted for by the number of children that they are caring for.

³ **Nb.** All claims will require proof of quote or receipt and should be submitted within 28 days of the incident. Claims submitted after this time may not be considered.

- 5.3 Respite payments must be agreed in advance by fostering manager. Claims should be made by the supervising social worker on the appropriate claim form (held by the supervising social workers, therefore not attached to this document).

Tax Payments

- 5.4 Foster carers are responsible for paying their own income tax and national insurance contributions and must contact HM Revenue & Customs to register themselves as self-employed when they are approved at panel.
- 5.5 There is a national agreement regarding tax allowances for approved foster carers. During the tax year, carers will receive a fixed tax allowance, dependent upon the child/young person's age when placed with the carer in that year. A tax statement will only be sent to carers if a taxable amount is required to be paid for payments received above this allowance.
- 5.6 The Fostering Network and local HM Revenue and Customs office can provide full current information on the allowances which can be claimed.
- 5.7 Further information can be found at <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/individuals/foster-carers.htm> or by contacting HMRC newly employed helpline on 0845 915 4515 to register yourself as self-employed. You can also contact fostering network on **020 7620 6400** for further advice.

Financial Record Keeping

- 5.8 It is important that foster carers budget their weekly payments to ensure that children/young people's needs are met.
- 5.9 Keeping records will assist foster carers when requesting any discretionary or exceptional payments as expenditure on the child can then be accounted for. This is not only important in regards to how allowances have generally been spent, but also specifically on forms required for expense claims, pocket money and savings.
- 5.10 It is recommended that all foster carers keep a copy of their own financial records as well as providing copies to the fostering or carers' payments team.

6 Additional Payments

Recruitment payments ('refer a friend fee')

- 6.0 £500 will be paid to a foster carer introducing a family member or friend to foster for Stoke-on-Trent City Council. The amount will be payable once the person recruited has been approved as a foster carer for Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

Training Payments (*renewed*)

- 6.1 Some foster carers will be invited to assist the fostering service to deliver particular training courses (Skills to Foster, Training Workshops etc.). A fee of £7.78 per hour will be provided, with prior agreement and permission from the fostering manager.

Long service retention payments⁴ –

- £100 will be paid to foster carers who have been fostering for Stoke for **5 years continuously**, payable after a positive annual review in the fifth year of fostering.
- £200 will be paid to foster carers who have been fostering for Stoke for **10 years continuously**, payable after a positive annual review in the tenth year of fostering.
- £250 will be paid to foster carers who have been fostering for Stoke for **15 years continuously**, payable after a positive annual review in the fifteenth year of fostering.
- £300 will be paid to foster carers who have been fostering for Stoke for **20 years continuously**, payable after a positive annual review in the twentieth year of fostering.
- £350 will be paid to foster carers who have been fostering for Stoke for **25 years continuously**, payable after a positive annual review in the twenty-fifth year of fostering.
- £500 will be paid to foster carers who have been fostering for Stoke for **30 years continuously**, payable after a positive annual review in the thirtieth year of fostering.

Loans/Grants

- 6.3 In some very exceptional circumstances a financial package for the fostered child may be approved which could include loans/grants or additional allowances. This should be to facilitate the interest of the child in placement. Should you believe you require a loan under the circumstances outlined above, please speak with your supervising social worker who will explore this with you and then the Fostering Service Manager who can take the matter further.

Resolution of difficulties

- 6.4 If a difficulty arises in relation to the payment of allowances, the foster carer should initially discuss this with their supervising social worker. If this does not resolve the problem then the matter should be referred to a Fostering Team Manager. The Service Manager of the Fostering Team will be the final arbiter in the first instance.

⁴ General, Respite and Short Breaks Foster Carers only, qualify. However, under the updated scheme for retention payments, such fostering households who qualify for under 15 years continuous fostering (as at 01/04/2016), who have not previously been able to claim under the old scheme will not be able to claim in retrospect for payments.

FOSTERING ALLOWANCES PAYROLL DATES
(Financial Year 2021/22)

	PAYROLL DATES	1ST RUN DATE	PAY DATE	COMMENTS
1	29/03/21 to 11/04/21	01/04/21	09/04/20	
2	12/04/21 to 25/04/21	16/04/21	23/04/21	
3	26/04/21 to 09/05/21	30/04/21	07/05/21	
4	10/05/21 to 23/05/21	14/05/21	21/05/21	
5	24/05/21 to 06/06/21	28/05/21	04/06/21	
6	07/06/21 to 20/06/21	11/06/21	18/06/21	
7	21/06/21 to 04/07/21	25/06/21	02/07/21	HOLIDAYS ALLOWANCE (2 WEEKS BASIC ALLOWANCE)
8	05/07/21 to 18/07/21	09/07/21	16/07/21	
9	19/07/21 to 01/08/21	23/07/21	30/07/21	
10	02/08/21 to 15/08/21	06/08/21	13/08/21	
11	16/08/21 to 29/08/21	20/08/21	27/08/21	
12	30/08/21 to 12/09/21	03/09/21	10/09/21	
13	13/09/21 to 26/09/21	17/09/21	24/09/21	
14	27/09/21 to 10/10/21	01/10/21	08/10/21	
15	11/10/21 to 24/10/21	15/10/21	22/10/21	
16	25/10/21 to 07/11/21	29/10/21	05/11/21	
17	08/11/21 to 21/11/21	12/11/21	19/11/21	CHRISTMAS ALLOWANCE (1 WEEKS BASIC ALLOWANCE)
18	22/11/21 to 05/12/21	26/11/21	03/12/21	
19	06/12/21 to 19/12/21	10/12/21	17/12/21	Double run
20	20/12/21 to 02/01/22	10/12/21	17/12/21	
21	03/01/22 to 16/01/22	07/01/22	14/01/22	
22	17/01/22 to 30/01/22	21/01/22	28/01/22	
23	31/01/22 to 13/02/22	04/02/22	11/02/22	
24	14/02/22 to 27/02/22	18/02/22	25/02/22	
25	28/02/22 to 13/03/22	04/03/22	11/03/22	
26	14/03/22 to 27/03/22	18/03/22	25/03/22	