

Changes to Additional Allowance Payments

Basic Fostering Allowance

By law, the Council has to pay a national minimum fostering allowance. This amount is determined and subject to annual change by the Department for Education. At the time of writing, the updated rates for the 2016/17 financial year have not been released. Therefore, the current rates are used in the table below.

Age Group (yrs)	Basic Fostering Allowance
0-4	£126
5-10	£139
11-15	£159
16+	£185

Skills Payments

It is proposed that the Council maintains its current fee structure for skills payments, with the same criteria for progression between levels. Due to re-distributing budget from elsewhere, it is possible to slightly increase skills fees for Levels 2, 3 and 4.

The only change to the current system is that going forward, new carers and current carers who are not yet Level 4 carers will, on progressing to Level 4, receive a reduced skills fee if they are looking after a child aged 0-4 yrs. The revised skills offer is shown in the table below.

Age Group (yrs)	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
0-4	£0 (no change)	£22 (£0.25 per week increase)	£44	Current Level 4 Carers: £108 (£2.00 per week increase) Future Level 4 Carers: £88 (£18.00 per week decrease)
5-10	£0 (no change)	£22 (£0.25 per week increase)	£44 (£0.50 per week increase)	£108 (£2.00 per week increase)
11-15	£0 (no change)	£22 (£0.25 per week increase)	£44 (£0.50 per week increase)	£108 (£2.00 per week increase)
16+	£0 (no change)	£22 (£0.25 per week increase)	£44 (£0.50 per week increase)	£108 (£2.00 per week increase)

In summary:

- Level 1 carers will not receive a skills fee – no change from current policy
- Level 2 carers skills fee will increase by £0.25 per week
- Level 3 carers skills fee will increase by £0.50 per week
- Current Level 4 carers skills fee will increase by £2.00 per week – Future Level 4 carers will also receive this increase, unless they are caring for a child aged 0-4 years, where they will receive a skills fee of £88 per week.

New Fostering Supplement

Each fostering household will receive £10 per week per child in placement in addition to the basic fostering allowance. This will be funded from within the existing fostering payments budget.

Maintained Additional Allowances

The following additional allowances will be kept with the same amounts / terms and conditions as the current system:

- Birthday allowance at 1x basic fostering allowance received automatically 3 weeks in advance as per the current arrangement
- Festivity allowance at 1x basic fostering allowance
- Large Family Transport Allowance at £43.50 per week for eligible carers
- Babysitting allowance at £3.50 per hour for eligible carers.

The following additional allowances will also be maintained but with different terms and conditions and /or maximum amounts available. Changes made are explained below.

Holiday allowance

The new holiday allowance for each age group is shown in the table below. All carers will continue to receive this in the same way they do now.

Age Band (years)	Current Holiday Allowance	New Holiday Allowance
0-4	£252	£250
5-10	£278	£300
11-15	£318	£350
16+	£370	£400

Immediate Clothing

The Immediate Clothing Allowance will be re-named Emergency Clothing Allowance. The standard Emergency Clothing Allowance will be £50 per child, with provision to pay up to £100 per child if required. Any claim above £50 will require receipts to be processed.

Age Band (yrs)	Current Maximum Immediate Clothing Allowance	New Emergency Clothing Allowance
0-4	£222	£100
5-10	£292	£100
11-15	£336	£100
16+	£366	£100

Equipment

The new guidelines will state that a support grant will be available to equip new carers with equipment needed to care for ages of children and young people they are approved to care for. This grant will be capped at £500. The expectation going forward is that carers will make arrangements to replace own equipment once they are established. Current arrangements made to replace cot mattresses and car seats will be maintained.

The current policy states *‘when foster carers need help from the department with essential items for a child (e.g. pram, cot, buggy, fireguard etc.) their supervising social worker will assist with the request. Grants (which are benchmarked to high street prices are paid directly for the purchase of essential items. The Fostering Team Manager’s agreement for these purchases **must be must be given prior to making or confirming the purchase**’*

Exceptional Payments

The Council will continue to have some provision available to provide additional financial support in exceptional circumstances. This exceptionality is not designed to replace additional allowances that will no longer be available. Instances could include but are not exclusively limited to: residential school trips, school bursaries and educational equipment. If carers believe they require exceptional financial support, they are to discuss this with their supervising social worker in first instance.

Ceased Additional Allowances

The following additional allowances will no longer be available for carers to claim. Expenditure on these allowances will be re-distributed to pay for the fostering supplement, which all carers will receive and to pay for the slight increase in skills fees.

Activities (including cookery ingredients) – currently a maximum of £16 per week

This is to cover the costs for activities for a child with additional needs to promote social / physical wellbeing; or to give additional cultural support

Activity allowance for Support Carers – currently a maximum of £31.80 per child support care placement

This is to cover the costs of activities for children in support care placements

School uniform allowance – currently between a maximum of £222 and £366 per academic year

This allowance is to pay for essential uniform when a child moves to a new school, starts a new academic year or has had an exceptional growth spurt.

The amount paid depends on the child's particular needs but the maximum amount paid in any one year is the same as the immediate clothing allowance

Clothing allowance – currently paid at no more than half of the immediate clothing allowance as a one off grant

This allowance is used to pay for cultural needs; heavy wear and tear, children with disabilities; poor self-image; fast growers; unusual size or children and young people with destructive behaviour.

Additional Holiday Allowance – currently a maximum of £750 per child per year

In exceptional circumstances, additional holiday costs that cannot be met from the annual holiday allowance will be considered by the Group Manager. The Group Manager's agreement to pay an additional holiday cost must be sought prior to making or confirming holiday plans

Personal Needs allowance (including hair and skin care) – currently a maximum of £10.55 per child per week

This allowance pays for specific skin and hair care products for a child; a child with a need for spectacles/ contact lenses or equipment for a disabled child

Disturbance allowance – currently a one off payment of £31.80

This allowance is only paid when a placement is made with less than 24 hours' notice

Dietary – currently a maximum of £10.50 per week

This allowance pays for food related to a child's culture; diets for children with disabilities; extra vitamins; food for children with diabetes; vegetarian diet and food for weight management

Excessive wear and tear on home – currently a maximum of £13.20 per week

This allowance covers extra laundry costs as a result of incontinence, bed wetting, vomiting which is excessive for a child of their age, wear and tear on bedding, furniture and decorations.

With regards to excessive wear and tear on the home, if a child or young person has caused wilful damage to household equipment or property that is not covered by household insurance, the fostering service will continue to support carers to meet the financial costs of this. This is consistent with current arrangements in place

Additional household expenses (including mobile phones, extra heating etc.) – currently a maximum of £13.20 per week for heating and £5.30 per week for telephone allowance

This allowance covers extra heating costs (e.g. for children with asthma), extra telephone costs and additional household equipment

Prom – a maximum one off payment of £206

This allowance is available for prom events

Hospitality – currently a maximum payment of £5.30 per week

This allowance covers hospitality for a child's family and friends/ social worker

Mileage

Mileage included within the weekly fee will increase from 20 miles per week (80 miles per 4 weeks) to 25 miles per week (100 miles per 4 weeks). The current volunteer mileage rate of 45p per mile will continue to be paid for mileage above 25 miles per week. The cost of public transport for agreed travel will also continue to be reimbursed as it is currently.