



NOTICE OF MEETING

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

FRIDAY, 20 MARCH 2020 AT 5.00 PM

THE EXECUTIVE MEETING ROOM - THIRD FLOOR, THE GUILDHALL

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If any member of the public wishing to attend the meeting has access requirements, please notify the contact named above.

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Group Spokespersons

Councillor Judith Smyth, Labour

Councillor Matthew Atkins, Conservative

(NB This Agenda should be retained for future reference with the minutes of this meeting.)

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AGENDA

- 1 **Apologies for absence**
- 2 **Declaration of interests**
- 3 **Allowances and Skill Fees Annual Review (Pages 3 - 62)**

Purpose

To provide the Cabinet Member with an update, following a review of the allowances and skills fees for foster carers, Staying Put, Family Link and Lodgings-Plus carers; and to seek approval to implement the revised policy (which includes the scale of allowances and fees table) at Appendix 1.

RECOMMENDED that the Cabinet Member for Children & Families

- 1. Approve the revised policy (Appendix 1) with effect from 01 April 2020, and specifically note the following key changes:**
 - i. The proposal for Hub home carer payments under the pilot Mockingbird Programme.**
 - ii. The proposal to increase the Introduction Fee from £250 to £500.**

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Title of meeting:	Cabinet Member for Children and Families
Date of meeting:	20 March 2020
Subject:	Allowances and Skill Fees Annual Review
Report from:	Sarah Daly - Deputy Director of Children and Families Services
Report by:	Danielle Tully - Head Looked After Children Services
Wards affected:	All
Key decision:	No
Full Council decision:	No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Cabinet Member with an update, following a review of the allowances and skills fees for foster carers, Staying Put, Family Link and Lodgings-Plus carers; and to seek approval to implement the revised policy (which includes the scale of allowances and fees table) at Appendix 1.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that the Cabinet Member approve the revised policy (Appendix 1) with effect from 01 April 2020, and specifically note the following key changes:

- 2.1.1. **The proposal for Hub home carer payments under the pilot Mockingbird Programme.**

- 2.1.2. **The proposal to increase the Introduction Fee from £250 to £500.**

3. Background

- 3.1. In line with the 'National Minimum Standards (NMS) for Fostering Services'¹ (NMS), the Council is required: *'to ensure each foster carer receives at least the national minimum allowance for the foster child, plus any necessary agreed expenses for the care, education and reasonable leisure interests of the child, including insurance, holidays, birthdays, school trips, and religious festivals etc., which cover the full cost of caring for each child placed with her/him'*.

¹ Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards, Department for Education

- 3.2. In addition, the NMS requires the Council to have a clear and transparent written policy on payments to foster carers, which sets out the criteria for calculating payments and distinguishes between the allowance paid and any fee paid.
- 3.3. There is a statutory requirement to annually review allowances and fees and to consult with carers and inform them of any changes.
- 3.4. Developing from the Stronger Futures Excellent Care Board (now merged with the Corporate Parenting Operational Group) Portsmouth City Council has signed a contract to deliver The Fostering Network Mockingbird Programme. This is an evidenced based programme with evaluated positive outcomes including improved stability of fostering placements and strengthened relationships between foster carers, fostered children, fostering services and birth families. Mockingbird is an innovative method of delivering foster care which centres on an extended family model which is based on a constellation, with one foster home that acts as a 'hub' offering respite/sleepovers, advice, training and ongoing and emergency/crisis support to up to 10 'satellite' fostering families. The recruitment of a suitability experienced and skilled 'home hub' carer is crucial to the successful implementation and roll out of the programme within Portsmouth City Council. This is a pilot project and will be reviewed at the end of the first year. The contract to deliver the programme commenced November 2019, however the review will need to be a year following the launch of the first Hub to analysis the effectiveness and benefits of the service in June 2021.
- 3.5. In addition to having suitable skills and experience a hub home carer must have and maintain two vacant fostering beds which will be used to provide regular sleepovers for children within the constellation. In accordance with the Mockingbird principles the level of sleepovers the home hub carer facilitates will depend on the constellation, the needs of the satellite carers and the looked after children within the constellation. This will replace the need for respite arrangements with carers outside the constellation. Providing stability and 'normalisation' for the children within the constellation.
- 3.6. In line with the statutory requirement to annually review allowances and fees, a consultation on the proposals contained within this report was undertaken with carers via representation on the Mockingbird Implementation Working Group. There was unanimous agreement from carer representatives to the proposed Hub home carer payments.
- 3.7. In line with existing Cabinet Member agreement the Deputy Director of Children's Services in consultation with the S.151 officer has adjusted Standard Fostering Allowance (and any allowances which are directly related to these rates), Staying Put, Family Link and Supportive Lodgings Allowances in line with the percentage change to the relevant Government Minimum Fostering Allowance - South East effective from 01 April 2020.
- 3.8. The proposals contained within this report seek to ensure that the recruitment of foster carers, staying put carers, family link and supportive lodgings carers for Portsmouth children and young people, continues to be effectively

promoted by approving a legally compliant and competitive financial support package; ensuring Portsmouth City Council remains competitive in the market place. The full policy is attached at Appendix 1.

4. Proposed Changes

- 4.1. The key changes proposed to the Allowances and Skill Fees policy is explained in the sections below.

5. Hub home carer payments

- 5.1. Within the Mockingbird Model there is no nationally set structure for defining the payments of Hub home carers. However there is clear guidance from The Fostering Network which has been followed in drawing up PCC Mockingbird proposed payments. This includes: paying hub home carers through a combination of fostering fees and allowances when hub home carers provide respite and sleepovers; typically paying the equivalent of a services 'top tier/level' foster carer with two full time placements; paying an additional budget to cover the cost of social events and hub activities; keeping payment schemes as simple as possible and in line with the service's existing Fostering Financial Scheme.
- 5.2. In line with the above principles and guidance the proposed Mockingbird payments are linked to PCC existing Fostering Service Financial Scheme. Hub home carers will be recognised as level 3 carers and, relating this to the Financial Scheme, they will receive a Mockingbird payment which is the equivalent of two level 3 fees. This will ensure that there is no financial disincentive to skilled and experienced foster carers putting themselves forward to become 'hub home' carers.
- 5.3. In addition it is proposed that the 'hub home' carer will be paid per child at the age related nightly fostering allowance rate and level 1 fee when providing sleepovers/respite care. Satellite carers will continue to receive the fee and allowance payments relevant to their skill level during respite/sleepover periods. This is in line with existing respite payment arrangements and the principles of the Mockingbird Programme which promotes 'sleepovers' as an effective means of supporting placement stability, retention of carers and meeting a child's identified needs.
- 5.4. Hub home carers provide a 24/7 support service to the satellite carers and children within their constellation. In order to provide this level of care and support breaks are essential under the Mockingbird Programme. It is proposed to provide hub home carers 28 days paid annual leave per year. During this period hub home carers will continue to receive the Mockingbird fee payment.
- 5.5. It is proposed that £50 per week activities allowance will also be paid for hosting social events and activities and for providing ongoing and emergency support to satellite carers. It is proposed that this will continue to be paid during leave period as costs will be averaged out over the year.

- 5.6. The proposed payment scheme was presented to the Mockingbird Implementation Working Group on 10 January 2020 and was accepted as a viable payment proposal.
- 5.7. This is a pilot project and the project, and hub home carer payments, will be reviewed after a year to see if they are set at an appropriate level.

6. Introduction fee

- 6.1. There is a great deal of information from research about effective recruitment of foster carers. A key message throughout is that success is often related to the use of 'word of mouth' by existing foster carers as effective recruiters.
- 6.2. To encourage and reward Portsmouth City Council foster carers who recommend Portsmouth Fostering Service to someone they know, who later become an approved foster carer, Portsmouth Fostering Service have a well-established and effective Introduction Fee scheme in place.
- 6.3. In 2019 it was identified by the Fostering Marketing and Communication Officer that our main competitors, Hampshire County Council and Southampton City Council, were paying a higher monetary reward to their foster carers who recruited a friend.
- 6.4. To remain competitive, and to ensure that Portsmouth City Council foster carers feel valued in their role as effective recruiters, Portsmouth Fostering Service has increased our Introduction Fee from £250 to £500 in line with Hampshire County Council and Southampton City Council.
- 6.5. 'Word of mouth' from existing Portsmouth City Council foster carers remains an effective recruitment tool and agreement is therefore sought to for an increased Introduction Fee.
- 6.6. In addition newly approved foster carers recommended by existing foster carers are generally better informed and supported in their introduction to the fostering task through their connection with an existing foster carer. The Introduction Fee is therefore offset by both the positive benefits of increasing the number of in-house carers and the skill base and experience of new carers recruited via 'word of mouth'

7. Reasons for recommendations

- 7.1. The recommendations contained within this report, seek to ensure that the Council has a clear and transparent written policy on payments to foster carers, which sets out the criteria for calculating payments and distinguishes between the allowance paid and any fee paid, in line with the requirements of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.
- 7.2. In addition, the proposals seek to ensure effective implementation of the Mockingbird Programme within Portsmouth City Council by establishing a clear and attractive payment package for Home hub carers that will ensure the recruitment of effective Home hub carers by appropriately recognising the

skills and experience required for the role. This is a pilot project and the payment package will be reviewed as part of the overall review of the Mockingbird Programme following implementation as per the Contract in place between PCC and The Fostering Network.

- 7.3. These proposals seek to ensure that Portsmouth City Council Fostering Service remains competitive in order to encourage maximum recruitment of new carers via 'word of mouth' among existing foster carers.

8. Integrated Impact Assessment

- 8.1. An integrated impact assessment is not required as the recommendations do not have a positive or negative impact on communities and safety, regeneration and culture, environment and public space or equality and diversity.

9. Legal implications

- 9.1. The Council is under a legal obligation to review the level of foster carer's allowances to ensure that it is in line with the Government published minimum allowances.
- 9.2. The Council also needs to consider the minimum standards published by the department of Education. These minimum standards are used by Ofsted when inspecting fostering services. Minimum standards do not mean standardisation of provision. The standards are designed to be applicable to the wide variety of different types of fostering service. They aim to enable, rather than prevent, individual providers to develop their own particular ethos and approach based on evidence that this is the most appropriate way to meet the child's needs.
- 9.3. The minimum standards should ensure that foster carers are clear on the expectations on them, and on the Council to provide support and training for them to meet those expectations. When it comes to finances standard 28 states:

"Criteria for calculating fees and allowances are applied equally to all foster carers, whether the foster carer is related to the child or unrelated, or the placement is short or long term"
- 9.4. The aim is to achieve a situation where payments are fair and paid in a timely way and foster carers are clear about the fostering services payment structure and the payments due.
- 9.5. This report and consultation results identify that foster carers do have concerns about the payment structure. Whilst there will always be a risk of challenge to a payment structure or level, the consultation process and continued alignment with the minimum allowances the risk is minimised.
- 9.6. With regards to the Mockingbird Pilot, the report identifies support for the proposal by foster carers through consultation and the fee level's payable remain in line with minimum allowances as required.

10. Director of Finance's comment

- 10.1. The Mockingbird pilot is part of the Stronger Futures 2 Strategy. This should reduce costs as more children will be able to be able to be looked after in in house foster care or potentially returned home, and it should reduce the use of Independent Fostering Agencies. The costs of the project have been built into the budget. The fostering budget already pays on average for 10 nights of respite care per child, and the level of respite offered as part of the Mockingbird Model will need to be monitored during the pilot.
- 10.2. The additional costs from the introduction fee will be met from the in house 2020/21 fostering budget.

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Signed by: Sarah Daly, Deputy Director of Children's Services

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Portsmouth City Council - Fostering, Staying Put, Family Link and Lodgings Plus Allowances (LAC) for 2020-2021



Allowance Policy
2020-2021.docx

Appendix 2 - Person Specification - Mockingbird Hub Carer Role



Person
Specification - hub I

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Fostering Services - National Minimum Standards, Department for Education	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fostering-services-national-minimum-standards
Allowances and Skill Fees Financial Modelling	Children's Finance Team

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

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Signed by:

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PORTSMOUTH CITY COUNCIL
Fostering, Staying Put, Family Link
and Lodgings Plus Allowances (LAC)
for 2020 - 2021

Effective Date: 01 April 2020
Next Review Date: 01 April 2021

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1. Standard Fostering Allowance

- 1.1. Portsmouth City Council in line with Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards is committed to ensuring that foster carers receive appropriate and timely financial support when caring for a child or young person.
- 1.2. Portsmouth City Council has set their weekly standard fostering allowances in line with the Government National Minimum South East Fostering Allowance Rates.
- 1.3. Additional allowances are payable to allow for expenditure connected with birthdays, holidays and a religious festival – which is usually paid at Christmas unless otherwise requested. If the child moves before Christmas, any gifts which have been bought should follow the child, either to a subsequent placement, or home to family.
- 1.4. Allowances and fees are reviewed annually and carers will be consulted and informed of any changes.
- 1.5. Foster carers are not eligible to claim or receive Child Benefit for a foster child and the fostered child cannot be included in the foster family's claim for benefits or Tax Credits. Anyone who does so is committing an act of Fraud. Carers in receipt of benefits should contact the benefits agency to inform them of the allowance and any fees they receive through their fostering role and identify if there is an impact on their benefits. Foster carers cannot claim free school meals for a fostered child. The fostering allowance covers all food costs incurred by the child whilst in placement including school meals or packed lunches and meal costs during family contact.
- 1.6. When a child with a disability is placed, Foster Carers must inform their Supervising Social Worker to enable the Children's Services Department to claim all state benefits which are applicable in respect of caring for that child. No additional expenses are available from Children's Services and it is the expectation that additional expenses incurred by the carer will be offset by use of the child's Disability Living Allowance.
- 1.7. **Disability Living Allowance**

Where a child is placed who is, or may be, entitled to Disability Living Allowance (DLA) it will be the responsibility of the child's social worker to make a claim on behalf of the child. If a child is in receipt of DLA, prior to becoming a looked after child, the child's social worker should be involved in discussions with the parent concerning transfer of the DLA to the foster carer. The DLA benefit contains both a care and mobility component and is paid at different rates according to the child's needs. It is the responsibility of the foster carer to inform the child's social worker and their Supervising Social Worker if a child in their care is awarded DLA. The foster carer will be responsible for spending the child's DLA in line with the following guidelines - carers will not be expected to make additional claims to Children's Services to meet costs that can be covered by the DLA.

- 1.8. It is intended that the DLA be used to enhance the child's life so that the child derives maximum benefit from the payment of this benefit. The money is not intended to be saved for the child for use in later years as this could result in them being penalised. For example, if there is more than £3,000 in an account when the child returns home this

will affect any benefits claimed by the parents. For a child reaching 16 a sum of more than £8,000 will affect their claim for income support and housing benefits. The child's social worker must be involved in discussion on how the DLA can be used to improve the child's life and the carer's Supervising Social Worker is responsible for monitoring the way the money is spent via foster carer supervision.

Examples of how the money could be spent:

- Activities that are costly e.g. horse riding, after school clubs.
- Provision of an escort to enable social events to be attended.
- Extra helper for an outing or holiday.
- Taxi fares for trips out.
- Special holiday for the child, which could include covering the family's expenses.
- Caravan expenses so that the child can have regular breaks in a familiar place.
- Extra support such as child sitting service, using individuals who are Disclosure and Barring Service checked.
- Individual equipment such as computer, communication aids.
- Laundry service and appliances.
- Replacement clothing where there is excessive wear and tear on clothing.
- Additional heating costs.
- Additional help with personal care.
- Anything that will improve the child's life.
- Special toys to meet child's needs – which may be of therapeutic value.
- Domestic help to allow carer to spend more time with child.

Please note that all escorts or helpers must have a current Disclosure and Barring Service check to ensure their suitability.

Examples of hidden costs:

- Additional heating.
- Diet e.g. greater use of convenience foods to allow carer to spend more time with the child.
- Additional wear and tear on domestic appliances e.g. washing machine, tumble drier, microwave etc.
- Damage to property.
- Road tax, insurance and maintenance costs of a second or larger car (NB exempt from road tax if paid higher rate of mobility allowance and this allowance can also be used to lease a car through mobility scheme, which then includes servicing costs).

1.9. All foster carers including those in receipt of fostering allowances only are considered to be self-employed and must register with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) as such. It is the carers' responsibility to hold their remittance slips for minimum period of six years. If copies are lost, or carers require a hard copy of electronic remittance slips we can print them on request, however there will be a charge to cover the associated costs (see Appendix A).

1.10. An end of year tax statement will be sent to all foster carers by the Finance Team. Further copies of the end of tax year statement can be requested if the original is

misplaced for which there will be a charge to cover the associated costs (see Appendix A).

- 1.11. Fostering allowances and other income from fostering e.g. fees are considered income by HMRC. In April 2003 new Tax Relief measures were introduced. Further information on this can be accessed from the Fostering Network website:
<https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/advice-information/finances/tax-and-national-insurance>
- 1.12. A useful on line course for foster carers regarding tax matters is available from the HMRC web site: http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/courses/syob2/fc/HTML/fc_menu.html.
- 1.13. The weekly rates for Portsmouth City Council's Fostering Allowances are set out in Appendix A.
- 1.14. The fostering allowance covers all normal costs of caring for the child, including:
 - Food including school dinner money or packed lunches and meal costs incurred by the foster carer at family contact
 - Household expenses e.g. additional gas/electricity, wear and tear of furniture, carpets, washing machine etc., telephone usage, minor breakages
 - Clothing including shoes
 - Annual school uniform including uniform for a new school when the child has been in placement for six months plus
 - Toiletries/sanitary ware
 - Haircuts and other personal needs
 - General travel costs relating to the child's placement (including travel to and from the local school) and meetings relating to the child - see section on travel expenses for further details
 - School photographs, contribution to school funds, etc.
 - Pocket money
 - Long term savings for the child
 - Toys/books and games
 - All hobbies and activities and associated costs e.g. uniform/outings (cubs, swimming, judo, brownies etc.)
 - Standard school trips
 - Life story equipment, photographs, printing, photograph albums etc.
 - Medication – head lice lotions etc.
 - Baby expenses such as nappies, oils, creams, milk and baby feeding equipment etc.
 - Baby-sitters / child care for ordinary family social activities/carers personal commitments
 - Play group/nursery fees where charged and not agreed within the Care Plan
- 1.15. A breakdown by expenditure of the fostering allowance has not been produced. This is based on the principle advocated by Fostering Network that a generalised breakdown of allowances is overly prescriptive and the expenditure should be made on the needs of the specific child and using the professional judgment of the foster carer. Foster carers are not expected to spend the total fostering allowance each week but are expected to manage the overall budget over the course of the year or the duration of the placement.

Guidelines are given in the table of allowances for the proportion of clothing, long term savings and pocket money allowance included in the fostering allowance. The clothing and pocket money allowances are paid directly to young people aged 16 and 17 and deducted from the fostering allowance paid to the carer (see Appendix A).

1.16. Personal allowances and clothing allowance for 16 and 17 year old looked after young people in foster care and supported lodgings

Once a young person reaches the age of 16 years, they are entitled to receive their Personal Allowance and Clothing Allowance in their own right, which is deducted from the carer's weekly standard fostering allowance. This allowance can either be paid direct to the Young Person's bank account or continue to be paid direct to the carer to pass on to the young person as agreed between the young person, carer and young person's case worker.

1.17. Payments to young people in foster homes who have left school

A weekly Personal Allowance (see Appendix A) is paid to young people in foster homes who have left school. The Personal allowance is to cover all of the young person's personal needs, clothing, and some local travel.

1.18. Young people unemployed or in full-time education (excluding youth training)

A young person is entitled to a weekly Personal Allowance (See Appendix A). Young people will be expected to pay for their own travel to and from education if they are receiving a bursary. If their travel costs are significant due to the distance from placement to education then an additional payment may be made by PCC even if the young person has a bursary on a case by case basis in discussion with the young person's social worker. Where the young person is not eligible for a bursary and the college is not meeting the travel costs as part of the course then PCC will pay for public transport to and from education.

1.19. Young people in employment or youth training

Any foster carers aware that young people are working, need to inform the PCC finance department for advice about what they will need to do on 02392 841959 or you can email cflfinance@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

1.20. Any earnings from legitimate employment up to £50.00 per week will be disregarded. However any earnings under £50.00 per week will be supplemented up to this £50.00 limit by no more than the personal allowance (see Appendix A).

Proof of earnings by the presentation of weekly or monthly wage slips will be required to qualify for this top up.

1.21. Young people in employment or Youth Training should contribute up to 1/3 of their average net pay towards their maintenance costs and their contribution must be paid direct to the Foster Carer / department. The Carers weekly payments will then be adjusted accordingly. Net pay is the gross pay after compulsory deductions (Income tax, National Insurance etc.). This must be negotiated between the young person, carer and

their social worker and the finance team informed of the amount to be deducted from the carer's allowance.

- 1.22. The young person must retain the remaining 2/3 of the net pay towards the purchase of clothing, travel and recreation etc. The minimum amount to be retained is the personal allowance plus the actual cost of travel to and from work. The weekly amount of supplementation required from the Children's Services is the amount by which the young person's weekly contributions falls short of the 16 - 17 year old age banded weekly standard fostering allowance plus any skill fee payable minus the personal allowance.
- 1.23. Young people will always be better off if working, but will need to contribute towards their own rent if they are earning. Foster Carers will receive the same amount per week made up of payments from the Department and young person. The carer will continue to receive birthday/festival allowance for the young person.
- 1.24. Any contributions collected by Portsmouth City Council must be deposited in line with the Financial Rules of the Authority.
- 1.25. **Young people starting work or undergoing training**

Expenditure on necessary clothing, equipment and tools may be provided and paid for by the Service in appropriate cases as agreed by the young person's social worker and manager. All receipts will be returned to the Finance Team (Core 2, Floor 5 Civic Offices) for audit purposes. Where receipts are not received within 14 days of the payment the expenditure will be recovered from future payments to the foster carer.

Foster Care payments will always cease on the night before the Young person's 18th birthday. Further payments may be made under 'Staying Put' and should be agreed as part of the young person's Pathway Plan at least 4 weeks prior to the 18th birthday. The Finance Team MUST be notified and receive the necessary documentation of the 'Staying Put' decision so that they can arrange a seamless payment transition. The Finance Team MUST also be informed immediately of any changes to, or ending of, Staying Put Allowances to ensure carers are not under or over paid.

2. Staying Put

- 1.26. When young people reach the age of 18, Portsmouth City Council will pay the 'Staying Put' carers the full Lodgings Plus level payment for 2 weeks to help see them through the transition. The young person will be expected pay their contribution and claim housing benefit which the carer will also receive when it has been processed.
- 1.27. It is expected that young people fund at least part of this arrangement themselves, by making payments for their accommodation from their earnings, bursary, allowance or benefits. It is also expected that they maximise their income by claiming any benefits they are entitled to towards their income and rent such as Job Seekers Allowance, Housing Benefit/ Universal Credit. The young person must declare their income to their carer and Personal Advisor in order for their contribution to be calculated.
- 1.28. Portsmouth City Council will support the Staying Put Arrangement by topping up any Housing Benefit awarded and the Young person's contribution with a Staying Put

Allowance. The total payment of the combination of funding from the Young Person's contribution, Housing Benefit and Staying Put Allowance will equate to the current Lodgings Plus rate (including meal allowance). The amount of Staying Put Allowance will vary from carer to carer as the young person's contribution will vary dependant on their earnings and housing benefit will vary from home to home but the overall total will be the same unless they are entitled to an Exceptional Staying Put Premium (see 2.7 Additional Allowances).

- 1.29. Living away from the former foster carer's home for temporary periods such as attending higher education courses does not preclude a 'Staying Put' arrangement. This might include a residential further education institution; undertaking induction training for the armed services or other training or employment programmes that require a young person to live away from home.
- 1.30. When young people return to former foster carers in a Staying Put Arrangement during the holidays, payments will be made to support the placement. The payment for the holiday period will be made up in the usual way of Housing Benefit, Young Person's Contribution and Staying Put Allowance. Payments are not usually made during the period of time when young people are not resident in the Staying Put arrangement i.e. for university students no payments are made whilst young people are in halls but could be made if they return home for the weekend (see 2.7 Additional Allowances in relation to An Away From Home Premium).
- 1.31. The Staying Put Allowance will be paid direct from Portsmouth City Council, the Housing Benefit will be paid direct to the carer from Portsmouth City Council Housing Benefit team and the young person will pay their contribution directly to the carer.

1.32. **Additional Allowances**

It is anticipated that when young people move into a Staying Put arrangement they will require less support and supervision from their former foster carers. It is expected that they will not need constant supervision and should be able to be left in the home unsupervised for periods of time, able to make some meals for themselves, get themselves where they need to be with little prompting. This is therefore reflected in the lower payment that is made for young people in a Staying Put arrangement.

- 1.33. However it is recognised that not all young people develop at the same rate. Some young people may need as much support and supervision at 18 that you might expect to be required by a younger child. As a result there is the ability for an Exceptional Staying Put Premium to be paid. This premium can top the weekly payment up further to the level of a foster allowance that the former foster carer had been receiving. This will only be paid where this is appropriate to support a young person needing a high level of support and supervision and is expected to reduce over time as young people develop their independence.
- 1.34. Where the young person is open to the adult social work team due to their additional needs any additional payments would need to be agreed with the Adult Service and the Head Looked After Children Service including any sharing of the costs as with other young people the premium will be reviewed at least 3 monthly. In some circumstances it may be appropriate for a former foster carer to be assessed, approved and supported as a Shared Lives Carer. This should be considered as part of the young person's Pathway Plan.

1.35. Where the young person does not meet the criteria for an adult social worker, this exceptional premium would need to be agreed by the Head Looked After Children Service. It would be required to review the payment with the Head Looked After Children Service no less than 3 monthly to ensure that plans were in place to reduce the support needed. It would be expected that the additional allowance would reduce over time to no additional payment as the young person catches up with their peers.

1.36. It needs to be recognised that this young person would need to gain independence skills as soon as possible as they are already an adult and a high level of continuing support is not realistic or beneficial. If the young person is not developing then additional support, re-referral to adult services, and the appropriateness of the Staying Put arrangement should be considered.

1.37. For those young people staying away from home Staying Put allowances are only usually paid during the time they are staying with their carer. An Away From Home Premium can be made in order to stabilise the placement if agreed by the Head Looked After Children Service. This could be to enable the carer to visit the young person or to provide additional support for a period of time this additional payment would be time limited.

1.38. **Financial Contributions From Young People**

All young people need to make a financial contribution towards their rent and care costs. Young people claiming benefits or earning up to £50 per week will not be expected to make a weekly contribution as the first £50 is discounted. However if the young person and their carer agree that the young person purchases their own food then this amount will be reduced to a mutually agreed amount.

1.39. Young people in receipt of payments over £50 per week are expected to pay a contribution amounting to 1/3 of their weekly earnings (the first £50 having been disregarded). So if a young person earns £80 per week they will pay a contribution of £10 per week (1/3 of £30).

1.40. **Means Tested Benefits**

Where:

- A young person continues to reside with their former foster carer after their eighteenth birthday on a non-commercial and familial basis; **and**
- The child was Looked After immediately prior to their eighteenth birthday; **and**
- The payments are made by the local authority to the carer under section 23C of the Children Act 1989 (continuing functions in respect of former relevant children);

then the payments are disregarded in calculating the carers' entitlement to means-tested benefits.

1.41. When a commercial arrangement is made, (i.e. any element of the cost of the arrangement comes from a source other than section 23C), the non-section 23C element will be taken into account in the calculation of the carer's own means-tested benefit claim.

1.42. Additionally, the disregard is lost on the whole payment (section 23C and non-section 23C elements) when the young person first leaves the Staying Put arrangement, should the young person return to their former foster/Staying Put carer or move to another carer after their eighteenth birthday.

1.43. **Housing Benefit/Universal Credit**

All young people are expected to claim housing benefit to contribute towards their Staying Put arrangements unless their earnings are such that they do not qualify for housing benefit. Where carers are claiming Housing Benefit for their home the young person will not be eligible to apply.

1.44. **Council Tax and Council Tax Benefit**

The position regarding Council Tax will vary depending on the circumstances of the carers, the number of adults in the household and the activity that the young person is engaged in.

1.45. Young people undertaking full time education are 'invisible' for council tax purposes.

1.46. **Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), Income Tax and National Insurance**

For HMRC purposes only, there is a broader definition of 'Staying Put. A 'Staying Put' carer (for HMRC purposes only) does not need to be a registered foster carer or former foster carer. This means that young people are able to return to a different Staying Put carer between the age of 18 and 21 (or until the completion of an education or training course) - for example during a university vacation.

1.47. Where a Staying Put arrangement meets the HMRC qualifying criteria (and where the young adult continues to be cared for as a member of the carer's family) the Income Tax and National Insurance rules that apply to foster carers are extended to Staying Put carers. The young people are required to share the Staying Put carers' home and daily family life during the placement' i.e. live as a 'member of the carer's family'. This system provides for foster carers and/or Staying Put carers to earn up to a given amount without paying Income Tax or Class 4 National Insurance Contributions on their caring income.

1.48. The Income Tax free allowance consists of two elements, a fixed amount per foster care or Staying Put household and an additional amount per week per child.

1.49. Where there is more than one paid Staying Put carer in the household, the allowance is shared equally by both carers.

1.50. The tax free allowance only applies to the Staying Put carer's income from caring. If they have income from other sources, they will pay tax on that income in the normal manner.

1.51. Individual carers can consult their local HMRC office for guidance on their circumstances and liabilities.

1.52. For National Insurance Contributions purposes, in practice HMRC will treat the taxable profit from foster care or Staying Put care as earnings from self-employment. Foster care and Staying Put care is deemed as self-employment and as such carers should register

as self-employed. All self-employed people aged 16 and over who are below State Pension age are liable and must register to pay Class 2 National Insurance Contributions.

1.53. Insurance (Including Liability and Household Insurance)

Staying Put carers will be provided with information about liability insurance cover in situations where Staying Put young people may make an allegation against a foster child in placement, or against their Staying Put carer/s, or an allegation is made against the Staying Put young person. The majority of foster carers hold public liability insurance stemming from their local authority membership of Fostering Network or the British Association for Adoption and Fostering.

Further information on this can be accessed from HM Government 'Staying Put' Department for Education (DfE), Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and HMRC Guidance

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/201015/Staying_Put_Guidance.pdf

2. Savings

- 2.1. The weekly standard fostering allowance includes an amount that should be set aside as long term savings for the child. As this amount is a proportion of the standard fostering allowance (Government National Minimum South East Fostering Allowance Rates) the amount set aside for long term savings is considered income by HMRC. See 1.11 and 1.12 for guidance.
- 2.2. Respite carers are not required to set aside a proportion of the fostering allowance for long term savings. This proportion of the allowance should be used to maintain the child for the period of respite care.
- 2.3. It is the expectation that foster carers will encourage and support young people to save in order to teach them the value of saving and enable young people to have access to some financial independence. Where the levels of savings merit it carers should set up a savings account on behalf of the young person for the long term savings element of the fostering allowance (see APPENDIX D - Savings Guidance).
- 2.4. It is expected that young people will want to access their savings from time to time to enable them to access more expensive experiences and items such as holidays, school trips, lap tops, bicycles, musical instrument etc. The use of the young person's savings must be considered before any additional allowance can be paid to meet these costs. The young person should have the option to use their savings or forgo the item and continue to build their savings if that is their preference. A decision to release a young person's savings for an identified expenditure should be made by the foster carer in consultation with the child's social worker and the Supervising Social Worker.
- 2.5. Any outstanding balance of the young person's long term savings will be given to the young person by their foster carer around their 18th birthday in consultation with the young person's social worker.

3. Payments and Expenses



- 4.1 We are only allowed to discuss carers payment details with carers, we cannot discuss payments with a third party. Therefore the Finance Team will ask carers security questions when contacted. Please ensure you have your Creditor's Reference number to hand. This either commences with an F or an A.
- 4.2 Payments are made weekly for the current week (Sunday - Saturday) and paid directly into the carer's bank account by BACS. Payment should be received into a nominated bank account on a Friday. New foster carers will automatically be paid via BACS. Cheque payments will only be made to those carers who have a particular type of Building Society / Benefits account.
- 4.3 Emergency Cash Payments can be made for either initial clothing at £50.00 maximum per child (essential clothing items only), or one week's standard fostering allowance per child up to a maximum of £200.
- 4.4 Any cash payments raised in relation to the standard Fostering allowance will be deducted from the carers next payment on PCC's electronic payment system. Receipts are required for any payment for expenses paid by cash or through Portsmouth City Council's electronic payments system. All receipts should be forwarded to the Education, Children and Families Finance Team (Floor 5, Core 2 Civic Offices) within 14 days of purchase.
- 4.5 All overpayments made to foster carers, Care Leavers, prospective adopters, Adoptive and Residence Order Carers, Special Guardians, Lodgings Plus carers, Landlords, young people in receipt of Personal Allowances and temporary approved foster carers, or anyone in receipt of a payment must repay overpayments in full. Please see section 5 of this policy for more detail on how the Authority will recover money in the event of an overpayment being made.
- 4.6 If expenses are incurred that are not covered by this Procedure, the payment must be approved by the Senior Manager **BEFORE** the carer incurs the expense. An internal CC12 form must be completed, signed by the Supervising Social Worker, Service/Team Leader and the Head Looked After Children Service. Receipts must be returned to the Finance Team (Core 2, Floor 5 Civic Offices) within 14 days of purchase.
- 4.7 Fostering allowances are paid from the night the foster placement commences up to and including the night prior to the child leaving the foster home or becoming 18 years of age. Payments are made on a pro rata basis i.e. a one night placement is paid at one seventh of the age related fostering allowance and any fee payable.
- 4.8 This includes payments to a 'connected person' who has been granted temporary approval as a foster carer under Regulation 24 or Regulation 25 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010. The fostering allowance will be paid according to the child's age as if the carer had been approved by the Agency Decision Maker following presentation to the fostering panel.
- 4.9 Allowances are paid in these circumstances for a maximum of 16 weeks. If the applicant has not been approved by fostering panel within this time frame, under exceptional circumstances the Agency Decision Maker may agree to extend their temporary approval under Regulation 25 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, for a further period of 8 weeks (maximum of 24 weeks in total from date

of placement). Any payment beyond 24 weeks may in exceptional circumstances be agreed by the Head Looked After Children Service.

5. Overpayments policy

4.10 Where an overpayment occurs, the Children's Finance team will notify the carer(s) outlining the overpayment and detailing how it will be recovered. Notification of the overpayment will also be sent to the Children's Social Care service.

4.11 Where a carer is in receipt of future ongoing payments:

- i. If the overpayment equates to 3 nights or less of their continuing standard weekly payment amount, then the overpayment will be recovered in full from the following weeks payment.
- ii. If the overpayment equates to 4 nights or more, then the overpayment will be recovered in weekly instalments up to a maximum of 3/7ths of the standard weekly amount, for a maximum of 8 weeks.
- iii. If the overpayment exceeds the thresholds in i or ii above, then an invoice will be raised to recover the overpayment.

4.12 Where the carer is no longer in receipt of future ongoing payments, an invoice will be raised to recover the overpayment.

4.13 If the carer cannot repay the invoice within 28 days contact will be made with the carer(s) by the credit control team and an affordable re-payment plan will be devised.

4.14 The credit control team will monitor the re-payment and take further recovery action where agreed arrangements are not maintained; this may include legal action to recover the funds.

4.15 On the rare occasion that a placement has ended and you are still receiving payments, please contact the Children's finance team immediately on telephone no 023 9284 1959 or in writing to the Education, Children's and Families Finance Team, Floor 5, Core 2, Civic Offices, Guildhall Square, Portsmouth, PO1 2EA to prevent further overpayments being made.

6 Absences from the foster home

6.1 Payments at the full nightly rate (fostering allowance and any fees payable) may be made during a child's absence from the foster home where the absence is beyond the foster carer's control and **provided that it is intended the child will return to that foster home** e.g. if the child is in hospital or has absconded, for a maximum of 14 nights in any 12 month rolling period.

6.2 After 14 night's cumulative absence in any year, all payments to the foster carer will stop. In exceptional circumstances only, it may be possible to continue with some level of payment of fostering allowance and fee, however any such arrangement will be decided on a case by case basis and must be approved by the Senior Manager only.

- 6.3 Where a child is absent from the foster home in order to stay with relatives e.g. home on trial, extended contacts or adoption introductions, the foster carer will continue to receive the normal nightly rate (allowance and any fee payable) for the child(ren) in question for the duration of the visits. However, if the placement with the relative is a regulated placement e.g. approved foster carer, then the foster carer will not receive payment. Fostering allowances and any fees normally payable to the primary carer will be made on a pro rata basis for the nights when the child is in the foster placement except during a transition when the primary carer will continue to be paid in full for a period up to 14 nights. Where applicable a decision must be made at the planning stage and the Finance Team informed regarding which carer will receive the birthday or festival allowance payable.
- 6.4 Where a child is away from the foster home for a significant period of time on a regular basis, foster carers should discuss who is to take responsibility for buying the child's clothing and providing the child's pocket money with the child's social worker at the placement planning stage.
- 6.5 Payments to carers where young person removed due to an allegation made against a foster carer or member of the fostering household.**
- 6.6 Where carers are subject to an allegation and a child or children placed with them are removed as a result, the carer will continue to receive the fostering allowance and any fees normally paid for the removed child/ren for a period of up to 28 nights. This is intended to ensure that carers do not suffer undue financial hardship as a result of an allegation having been made against them.
- 6.7 Should an investigation still be ongoing after the 28 night period, the situation will be referred to the Head Looked After Children Service for a decision regarding continuing any payment.
- 6.8 Where no children have been removed but a carer has been formally suspended from taking any further placements following an allegation the case should be referred to the Head Looked After Children Service for a decision regarding any payment of fostering allowances or fees from the date of the suspension. The carer should be informed in writing of this decision.
- 6.9 Portsmouth City Council has the authority to cease these payments at any point; for example where a foster carer has been formally charged by the police in connection with an allegation or where the carer resigns from the fostering agency.

6.10 Holding a vacancy for a specific child

Where a child has left the placement, for example to return home or if the child is in custody, with the approval of the Fostering Service Leader, the Foster Carer may be paid the fostering allowance and any fee normally payable for a maximum of 3 nights, for keeping the child's bed free in case of emergencies. **Only the Head Looked After Children Service** can agree payments to continue for up to a further 11 nights in exceptional circumstances.

6.11 Independence flat/independent living

Young people, who are just about to leave care / fostering placement, can be booked into one of the Independence Flats for a 4 to 6 week period. During this time the foster carer will continue to receive their weekly standard fostering allowance in full plus any fees payable, as they will still be required to provide 24-hour support during this period. The young person will receive an increase in their weekly Personal Allowance equivalent to Care Leavers/ Job Seekers allowance (see Appendix A); this will not affect the carer's fostering allowance. The young person will also be entitled to additional payments for travel expenses for college, work, appointments or interviews above that which might normally be incurred when not living in their main residence. They are also expected to make a weekly contribution towards Water Rates and TV Licence (see Appendix A).

7. Annual School Holiday Allowance

- 6.12 The Annual School Holiday allowance, equivalent to two weeks standard fostering allowance, is paid to cover additional expenses during the 13 week school holidays. The main school holidays are Easter (2 weeks) and the summer holiday (6 weeks), however the payment is intended to cover all periods of school holidays throughout the year. The allowance is divided into two parts (and is paid automatically at the beginning of the Easter (25% of allowance) and Summer Holidays (75% of allowance) respectively if there is no change to a placement throughout the year. Should there be a change in the placement then the payment will be pro-rated
- 6.13 Because the allowance covers all periods of school holiday; if a child should move between carers for all or some of the holiday the corresponding allowance should move with them. The amount of school holiday allowance that should move between carers will be calculated by the Education, Children and Families Finance Team and will be based upon a 13 week school holiday period in any given financial year.
- 6.14 The payment for any future school holidays during the year at the point where the child is moved into a different placement will be recovered from the previous carer and paid to the new carer by the Education, Children and Families Finance Team within 2 weeks of being notified.
- 6.15 Where a child is placed with a carer and placement is new in the year the carer will be paid a pro-rated payment for the remaining school holiday weeks in the year.
- 6.16 Where a child moves placement during the year, any balance remaining of the holiday allowance will be automatically clawed back from the foster carer by the finance team and paid to the new foster care placement. Should the previous carer have already paid for goods or services with the holiday allowance then they will need to request a discretionary holiday payment (please see section 9) providing proof of purchase.

8. Play schemes

Play schemes are an additional holiday cost which is expected to be funded by the carer from within the Annual School Holiday Allowance. In exceptional cases, additional payments may be agreed but approval must be given by the Head Looked After Children Service.

9. Discretionary allowances for holidays

- 6.17 Where a holiday (i.e. that involves going away as part of the foster carer's family holiday) is planned for a young person the costs should be met in the first instance from the annual holiday allowance. If the holiday includes a child in receipt of DLA this allowance can be used to meet the holiday costs (see section on Disability Living Allowance). Where the annual school holiday allowance is insufficient to cover the costs and the holiday is considered to be in the best interests of that child, consideration should be given to use of the child's long term savings to meet the additional costs. Where all the above options have been taken into account the service will aim to support an outstanding balance via the Discretionary Allowance scheme. This requires senior manager approval and (once agreed) will pay the proportion of the cost of taking that young person on holiday with the foster carer's family. Carers are not to take children out of school during term time. Holidays booked during term time are not allowable for any child and will not be financially supported by Portsmouth City Council.
- 6.18 Payment will be made for holidays that are at least a week in length receipts must be provided to show the child's portion of the holiday – **One payment will be made per annum, per child up to a maximum amount (see Appendix A).**

10. Educational Journeys and Holidays

- 6.19 It may be important for a child's social, emotional and educational development to take part in school outings, journeys and holidays, youth organisations, camps and similar activities. Such day trips and activities will normally be covered within the standard fostering allowance. Where a longer holiday or more expensive activity is seen to meet a child's need consideration should be given in the first instance to use of the child's long term savings to meet the additional costs. If the activity relates to a child in receipt of DLA this allowance should be used to meet the costs (see section on Disability Living Allowance). Where all the above options have been taken into account the service will aim to support an outstanding balance and the Fostering Service Leader may authorise payment.
- 6.20 Payments under this arrangement are generally capped (see Appendix A) and only one trip per child will be supported each year.
- 6.21 Requests for payment in excess of this level need to be agreed by the Head Looked After Children Service.

11. Other Additional Educational Costs

- 6.22 Other educational costs e.g. Laptop, musical instrument etc. may be considered on an individual basis and need to be approved by the Head Looked After Children Service on the basis of the child's needs. In the first instance consideration should be given to the appropriate use of the child's birthday/festivity allowance, savings, DLA if applicable to meet these costs.

12. Playgroup / Nursery Fees

- 6.23 Any entitlement to free nursery provision should be utilised first before additional costs become payable.

- 6.24 The Children's Services may pay fees, where a foster carer and Social Worker agree that it is in the best interests of the child to attend a playgroup or nursery school. These fees must be reconsidered at least annually at the Statutory Review. If the carer has paid nursery fees in advance, they are entitled to a full refund providing they supply all receipts as per Audit Regulations.

13. Birthday and Annual Festivity allowances

- 6.25 An allowance equivalent to one week age related standard fostering allowance is paid to carers automatically two weeks prior to a child's birthday and again during the first week of December. This should be used to cover all associated expenses such as a birthday party, special meal, trip out and to buy a gift for the child from Portsmouth City Council. Cash should not be given as a birthday gift unless as a contribution towards an identified expenditure. As many families will do, it is appropriate to use the allowance to contribute towards the cost of more expensive items e.g. laptop, mobile phone, musical instrument, school trip, holiday or an activity such as horse riding or learning to drive. Any residual funding after meeting these costs should be paid into the savings account for the child.
- 6.26 The payment is expected to follow the child, therefore if the child moves placement after the payment has been made for a birthday or a religious festival, the payment must be forwarded in full to the next carer. This is the responsibility of the child's Social Worker. The payment can be returned to Portsmouth City Council so that it can be reissued to the new carer.
- 6.27 If the child is being admitted into a Children's home or returning home, the payment MUST be returned to Portsmouth City Council in FULL. If the Foster Carer has already spent some of the allowance the gift must be given to the child and all the receipts and change must be returned to Portsmouth City Council.

14. Initial Clothing Allowance

- 6.28 When a child is placed in foster care it is the responsibility of the child's Social Worker to ensure that the child has adequate clothing brought from their home when placed.
- 6.29 The service has a minimum clothing list (see Appendix B). This identifies the minimum level of clothing that all young people are expected to have in placement. The carer is responsible for maintaining and replacing the child's clothing (from their ongoing weekly fostering allowance) up to this level or beyond.
- 6.30 At point of placement the initial clothing requirement is;
- 7 sets of underwear
 - 1 set of nightwear
 - 3 T-shirts or equivalent
 - 1 warm top
 - 1 coat/jacket as required by the season
 - 1 pair of shoes/trainers
 - 2 pairs of trousers/jeans/skirt
 - Appropriate clothing for school

- 6.31 Where these items cannot be provided from the child's home within 24 hours of placement the carer can purchase items to meet the minimum clothing requirements. On submission of a receipt the carer will be reimbursed.
- 6.32 Where an emergency cash payment is required to cover any immediate initial clothing needs a payment of up to £50 can be made to the carer - supporting receipts must be submitted post purchase within 14 days of receiving the cash payment (see also section 4).

15. School Uniform

- 6.33 Payment will only be made to support a school uniform if the child starts a new school within six months of placement, changes schools un-expectedly, attends a school with specific high cost uniform requirements or if the child changes placement and does not have adequate school uniform. It should be noted that if a child has been in placement over 6 months the service would expect the cost of any new uniforms to be met from their standard fostering weekly allowance.
- 6.34 The weekly clothing allowance paid in the standard fostering allowance will cover ongoing clothing costs (including school uniform). When a child joins a new school, changes school or moves placement in the circumstances outlined above the Social Worker should discuss with the foster carer what uniform items, including sports clothing and school equipment, is necessary, particularly if the child is unlikely to remain in the school permanently. Many items of uniform can be transferred from one school to another.
- 6.35 Where payment is required to support a new school uniform the expenditure will be capped at the levels shown in Appendix A.
- 6.36 These expenditure caps apply to both mainstream and special schools – each settings cap being calculated on the appropriate phase of educational provision.
- 6.37 Any requests for expenditure above these levels must be agreed with the Head Looked After Children Service before financial commitments are made.

16. Special Interests/ Hobbies

- 6.38 As this is already being paid within the weekly standard fostering allowance, no further payments will be paid.
- 6.39 Carer's are reminded to use the free Portsmouth City Council Leisure card, available to 'Looked After' children and the children of foster carers. Foster carer's can obtain an application form and authorising letter from their Supervising Social Worker.

17. Spectacles/ Corrective Lenses

- 6.40 Expenditure for the full cost of frames for National Health Service lenses, or repairs to spectacles will be reimbursed when required.
- 6.41 As Portsmouth City Council has an agreement with Boots, all enquiries associated with the provision of frames and lenses should be made through them in the first instance. It

should be noted that those under 16 years (or under 19 if they are in full time education) are entitled to free eye tests and may qualify for free spectacles.

- 6.42 If any additional costs are incurred (associated with the provision of corrective lenses) these must be agreed in writing with the Service Leader in advance of the expenditure being made. Failure to adhere to this process may result in additional costs that would not be reimbursed by the Service.

18. Ethnic, Racial and Cultural Needs

- 6.43 There may be specific expenses that arise because of a child or young person's cultural or ethnic background. For some children additional payments may be made to cover needs relating to hair care, skin care and other specific issues.
- 6.44 All payments will be based on an assessment of the child or young person's needs and should be specified within the Placement Agreement and authorised by a Service Leader.

19. Medical Issues

- 6.45 Most medical examinations and treatments are free for young people. Portsmouth City Council will look at the individual needs of young people who require specific support that is either reflected in their care or placement plan. Portsmouth City Council supplies self – harm response kits and body spillage kits to those placements that have a particular requirement for this type of resource.

20. Passports

- 6.46 If the necessary approval has been given for a child to apply for a passport, or passport renewal depending on the child's age and legal status the child's social worker, parent or young person themselves will complete the passport application form. Where incurred the foster carer will be reimbursed for any costs associated with the passport application.
- 6.47 The foster carer will be expected to pay for the child's passport photographs from their weekly standard fostering allowance.

21. Bicycles

- 6.48 When it is agreed that is in the child's interest to own a bicycle and it will be well used, first consideration should be given to funding the bicycle from either the Birthday, Festivity allowance or from the child's savings. Where this is not the case consideration should be given to seeking a second hand bicycle, unless this would seem a false economy. Bicycles are expensive and are intended to last a child a significant time.
- 6.49 Bicycles should be tested as road worthy (by a recognised bicycle retailer / specialist) and each child should where available attend a Cycling Proficiency Course and wear a cycle safety helmet. Before allowing a child to cycle on roads carers should assess the child's safety and competence as any responsible parent would. The bicycle must have an adequate lock and be post coded using the Police identification System. The bicycle must also be insured against theft by listing it on the carer's household insurance policy.

6.50 Where the bicycle is not purchased as a birthday or festive gift the purchase must be discussed with the child's Social Worker and authorisation given by the Service Leader. All receipts must be forwarded onto the Finance Team (Core 2, Floor 5 Civic Offices) for audit purposes.

22. Travel Expenses

6.51 The Foster Care mileage rate is in line with PCC staff mileage payment rate and carer's are covered by HMRC Regulations (see Appendix A).

6.52 Carers can claim for travel costs (including mileage, parking and public transport) incurred as a result of caring for a foster child - this does not include family activities which may include the foster child but so do not relate specifically to the foster child.

6.53 The fostering allowance covers an element towards the cost of travel expenses which arise from the need to make trips in relation to the child in placement e.g. trips to school or nursery, leisure activities, hospital appointments, attending reviews or other meetings, undertaking contact arrangements or introductory visits to new foster homes or adoptive homes.

6.54 The weekly travel allowance included within the fostering allowance is the equivalent to a mileage rate of up to 25 miles or £11.25 in other travel costs (see Appendix A).

6.55 As foster carers already receive a weekly payment equivalent to 25 miles or £11.25 for reasonable local travel within their fostering allowance, this will be disregarded in any weekly claim made. No claims for journeys for under 1 mile will be accepted as carers will be expected to walk with children for short distances.

6.56 Taxis will only be used when there is no other safe or timely alternative. These will be booked and paid for by PCC as they have negotiated cheaper rates. If this is the main form of transport used by a child, then consideration will be given to reducing the transport element of the fostering allowance as the foster carer is not providing transport. Otherwise they are not being treated equally with carers who are spending their travel allowance on travel costs.

6.57 Where the foster child is in receipt of DLA this allowance should be used by the carer to cover the child's travel costs and no additional claim to Children's Services for travel would be expected.

6.58 Travel expenses must be claimed on a form for Foster Care Expenses (currently a BOA2 form), and submitted on a weekly or monthly basis to the Supervising Social Worker. This claim should include all details of the journey undertaken (generic terms like "school" or "doctors" must be replaced with physical locations / destination names and postcode details if known).

6.59 Lodgings Plus carers/Staying Put carers are not generally expected to transport young people as the young people should be organising this to encourage independence skills. If Lodgings Plus/Staying Put carers consider they should provide transport to give extra support this should be agreed in advance with their social worker or an out of hours member of staff if reimbursement is required. If agreement has been given then this can be claimed as a refund of tickets or at the foster carers mileage rate per mile if a car is

used (see Appendix A). If taxis are agreed they should be booked on account by social work staff. Examples of relevant travel would be college interview, hospital appointment, funeral etc.

- 6.60 All claims for journeys must represent the actual journey undertaken – Claims will be subject to an audit to ensure that the distances claimed are appropriate for the journey made. If audit checks identify discrepancies in the amount claimed and the length of the journey undertaken then the claim will be rejected and returned to the carer.
- 6.61 Claims should be submitted on a weekly or monthly basis and no later than 5 weeks from the last day of the previous month. Any late claims or claims over 3 months old will not be paid unless agreed as a one-off exception by the Head of Looked After Children, as per HMRC Regulations and will be processed ONLY when time allows. Carers should not deduct the initial £11.25 from their claim, as this will be deducted automatically. However, claims should not be submitted if the weekly amount to be claimed is less than £11.25.

23. Expenses associated with moving a child onto adoption/SG, new foster home or rehabilitation

- 6.62 Such expenses e.g. transport, overnight accommodation, subsistence must be agreed in advance at the relevant planning meeting. The carer will be reimbursed their expenses supported by receipts as agreed.

24. Child care and travel expenses for attending fostering training and meetings (connected to role as a foster carer not in relation to the child in placement)

- 6.63 It is the carer's responsibility to make appropriate child care arrangements in order to attend training or attend meetings. Relevant checks on those who provide regular child care will be made by the fostering service if required.
- 6.64 The Babysitting rates (see Appendix A) apply ONLY ON production of a receipt as proof of the payment made.
- 6.65 Carers attending fostering training, events or meetings can claim full travel (mileage or public transport costs) and parking expenses. Mileage rates will be paid as outlined in Appendix A plus parking or public transport costs including ferry costs.
- 6.66 In exceptional circumstances if a taxi is required this must be pre-authorized by PCC via the carer's Supervising Social Worker and must be pre-booked via PCC at Corporate discounted rates.
- 6.67 Expenses should be claimed back on an AF24 'Foster Carers Training Form'. Costs associated with attending fostering training and meetings (not relating to children in placement) cannot be claimed back on a BOA 2 'Foster Carer's Expenses Claim' Form.

25. Equipment On Loan

- 6.68 Equipment may be provided in respect of a particular child or may be provided to foster carers after they have been approved via the Fostering Panel process, in order to ensure they are properly equipped to fulfil their fostering role. When carers do not have basic

equipment the Department will provide foster carers with equipment considered necessary for the welfare of their foster child. This may include cots, beds, bedding, storage space for children's clothing and personal items, pushchairs, playpens, stair gates, car safety seats, etc. All equipment is on loan. All requests should go via the Supervising Social Worker or Access to Resources (the Duty workers who arrange the placements).

- 6.69 If wear and tear has been especially heavy replacement items will be purchased such as a replacement mattress or bedding. For wear and tear associated with a specific disabled child this cost may be covered by DLA and this should be explored in the first instance.
- 6.70 All purchasing of equipment by carers where reimbursement of the cost will be requested must be agreed by the fostering manager in advance. Equipment available to loan from the fostering service will be made available to carers in the first instance when a need arises. All equipment is expected to be well maintained whilst it is on loan with carers, and instructions should be kept with the item.
- 6.71 When a child with a disability is placed with a carer, the child's Social Worker should ensure that any needs relating to the child are discussed at the Planning Meeting and at all subsequent reviews. Special equipment should be provided where necessary and consideration given to meeting the costs from the child's DLA. The Children's Services Occupational Therapist's assistance may also be sought.
- 6.72 This service is limited to provide equipment that is essential to the young person's care.

26. Damage and Loss Claims / Ex-Gratia Payments.

- 6.73 Foster Carers should be insured for any loss or damage resulting from their foster carer activities.
- 6.74 Foster carers must inform their Insurance Company (Building, Contents and Car) that they are foster carers for Portsmouth City Council.
- 6.75 Portsmouth City Council does not expect foster carers to find themselves worse off financially due to their role as a foster carer and consequently have an insurance policy in order to cover any damage or loss not covered by the foster carers insurance.
- 6.76 Foster carers should report any damage immediately to their own insurance company. If the carer's insurance company will not cover the damage/loss the carer should make a claim to Portsmouth City Council. Where the carer's own insurance company charge an excess the carer can make a claim for an ex-gratia payment to cover the excess. Supervising social workers or fostering admin staff can provide claim forms.
- 6.77 The decision of the insurance company is final unless the type of damage/ loss or item is not covered by the insurance. If this is the case then an extra gratia payment can be requested by completion of CA49 and CC12 forms and considered by the Head Looked After Children Service. Any excess in relation to Portsmouth City Council insurance policy will be paid by Children's Services.

- 6.78 In exceptional circumstances where the foster carer does not have insurance they can request an ex gratia payment as outlined above.
- 6.79 Portsmouth City Council expects carers to take reasonable steps to safeguard their possessions at all times and Police intervention may be required before any reimbursement is made. Foster carers are advised to keep evidence of items owned (a receipt if possible) in order to speed up any future claims.

27. Skill Fees

- 6.80 Fee paid Foster Carers are fully approved carers who, in addition to a standard fostering allowance for children placed, receive a fee which is aligned to an assessed skill level. Set criteria are used to assess a carer's skill level - these criteria are outlined in separate procedures.
- 6.81 Skills fees are paid per child and will be paid pro rata, reflecting the number of placement nights, when children are only placed for a proportion of the week.
- 6.82 In exceptional circumstances a skills fee may be paid to a temporary approved foster carer on a case by case basis where the foster carer can evidence they can meet the criteria of a level 1, level 2 or level 3 carer for a specific child. The level of fee is negotiated on a case by case basis and authorised by the Head of the Looked After Children Service

Level 1

- 6.83 It is the expectation that all foster carers fully approved by Portsmouth City Council will receive a Level 1 skill fee unless they are not meeting the required criteria.
- 6.84 The criteria for Level 1 is that carers commit to participate in regular supervision, agree to undertake core training and complete their TSD Workbook within the statutory timeframe (12 months from approval for mainstream carers and 18 months for family and friends and respite foster carers). This is the expectation of all foster carers fully approved by Portsmouth City Council.
- 6.85 Temporary approved foster carers will not receive a Level 1 skill fee until they have been fully approved via the Fostering Panel process. This is because they are not expected to commit to undertaking core training and completing their TSD Workbook until they have been fully approved.
- 6.86 In exceptional circumstances a level 1 skill fee may be paid to a temporary approved foster carer on a case by case basis where the foster carer can evidence they can meet the criteria of a level 1 carer for a specific child. The fee must be authorised by the Head of Looked After Children Service.
- 6.87 The Level 1 fee was initially set at the difference between the 2016-17 age related Fostering Network Recommended Fostering Allowance Rates and the age related Government National Minimum South East Fostering Allowance Rates, plus an enhancement amount which is paid to carers of children aged 0 - 4 years. This was

paid in recognition of the 24/7 nature of caring for pre-school children and the inability of carers to work outside the home when caring for children of this age.

6.88 Where carers progress to level 2 or level 3 they will continue to be paid level 1 fees in addition to fees paid at level 2 or 3.

6.89 See Appendix A for level of fees.

Level 2

6.90 Carers who are appraised as meeting the level 2 skill criteria will continue to be paid a level 1 fee in addition to a level 2 fee for children placed.

6.91 In exceptional circumstances a level 2 skill fee may be paid to a temporary approved foster carer on a case by case basis where the foster carer can evidence they can meet the criteria of a level 2 carer for a specific child. The fee must be authorised by the Head of Looked After Children Service.

6.92 See Appendix A for level of fees.

Level 3

6.93 Carers who are appraised as meeting the level 3 skill criteria will continue to be paid a level 1 fee in addition to a level 3 fee for children placed. Any previous level 2 fees paid for children now being paid at level 3 will cease.

6.94 In exceptional circumstances a level 3 skill fee may be paid to a temporary approved foster carer on a case by case basis where the foster carer can evidence they can meet the criteria of a level 3 carer for a specific child. The fee must be authorised by the Head of Looked After Children Service.

6.95 See Appendix A for level of fees.

6.96 Specialist Fee

A specialist fee payment can be made on a case by case basis to foster carers, including temporary approved foster carers, undertaking care that exceeds the expectations of a level 3 carer e.g. children with severe disabilities requiring 24 hour per day care. This fee is negotiated on a case by case basis and must be authorised by the Head of Looked After Children Service.

6.97 Carers undertaking a specialist placement will receive the standard fostering age related allowance plus an agreed specialist fee for an identified child.

28. Parent and Child Scheme

6.98 All parent and child placements will consist of a payment for any looked after children (parent/child or both) in line with standard age related fostering allowances (set at the 16 + age rate for parents regardless of their actual age), a payment for any non- looked after child in line with standard age related fostering allowances, a payment for any non-looked after parent in line with standard Lodgings Plus including meal allowance

rate, and a professional fee for the supervision of the placement, an additional supervision/professional fee if 2 parents in placement.

6.99 When parents are not looked after they are expected to provide for themselves including food (excluding breakfast and evening meal which is included within the lodgings element of the parent and child rate paid to and therefore supplied by the carer), clothes etc. When children are not looked after then the parent is expected to claim benefits for them and provide for the child including their food and clothes. When either the parent or child is looked after then the foster carer will provide for them financially as with any Looked after Child. It may be appropriate for the foster carer to pass part of an allowance to the parent in order for them to begin to learn to budget for themselves and their child to help prepare them for independence. This would be part of the care plan drawn up by the social worker for the child at the commencement of the placement. The Finance Team must be informed if a proportion of the allowance is to be paid directly to the parent.

6.100 See Appendix A for rate of Parent and Child allowances and fees.

6.101 See separate procedure for details of parent and child scheme.

29. Family Link

6.102 Family Link carers are paid an inclusive fee for each session that they undertake. Fees are calculated according to the length of the care period.

6.103 The Supervising Social Worker will complete all paperwork to initiate payment. Family link carers need to ensure that they inform their Supervising Social Worker of any care they have undertaken in order for payment to be made.

6.104 See Appendix A for payment rates.

30. Lodgings Plus

6.105 These are for young people aged 16 and 17 years who are 'Looked After'. (Young people below the age of 16 cannot be placed in rented accommodation or lodgings without the authorisation of a Head of Service).

6.106 See Appendix A for the Lodgings Plus rates.

6.107 Young People in Full Time Education/Further Education

The standard Lodgings Plus payment covers:

- Young person's room
- Household expenses
- Two meals a day - breakfast and evening meal
- Support of carer (minimum 10 hours per week)

6.108 An additional third meal allowance is paid to the Lodgings Plus carer where a young person is looked after. The Lodgings Plus carer is responsible for paying the young person a meal allowance or directly providing the young person with a third good meal.

6.109 Clothing allowance paid directly to the young person does not include school or college uniforms or clothing specifically required for a course that a young person maybe on. However a contribution towards or full payment for these should be negotiated for between the individual young person, their Social Worker and Social Worker's line manager.

6.110 Young People in Employment

Young people in employment will be expected to make a contribution to their accommodation in line with young people in foster care (see section 2.13 and 2.14)

6.111 Young people in Lodgings Plus aged 18 plus

6.112 When a young person turns 18 they are no longer looked after and their placement will be funded from three different sources: Staying Put Allowance payment made direct to the carer; young person's rental contribution paid directly to the carer by the young person from wages or benefits; housing benefit (where young people are in employment they are expected to pay a higher rental contribution to the carer to cover Housing Benefit shortfall) working.

6.113 The amounts each source pays will vary depending on the young person's individual circumstances e.g. if they are claiming income support, Job Seekers allowance or are in employment.

6.114 The above payments should amount to a weekly rate equivalent to the standard Lodgings Plus allowance including meal allowance and support element.

31. On-Call Emergency Placement Fee

- 6.115 An On-Call fee (see Appendix A) will be paid for foster carers who are available to offer emergency placements. Carers need to be willing and able to offer a placement to a child who may need to come into care at any time during that day or night and keep them in their care until the office reopens. In addition respective allowances and fees will be paid for any child placed while on call. This will assist with carers being available out of hours throughout the year and enhance a broader range of carers available to assist more suitable matching of the children's needs, as well as assist the Department to place children and young people in an emergency in a more timely way. Where an on-call carer declines to accommodate an appropriate child during the period they are on call they will not receive the on-call fee.

32. Day Time Only Respite Care - All Skills Levels

- 6.116 Where a foster carer is asked by the Fostering Service to look after a child or children during the day and no overnight stay is involved the carer will be paid at the Day Care rate.
- 6.117 Day care of 4 hours or more will be paid at the normal nightly rate, dependant on the age of the child and level of the carer. Care for less than 4 hours will be paid at half the nightly rate, dependant on the age of the child and level of the carer. Children and young people should be matched to a carer with the appropriate skill level to undertake the day care required.
- 6.118 See Appendix A for Day Care Rates.

Day care is child-minding and those that undertake day care may be required to be registered in accordance with the child-minding regulations which are not the same as being registered as a foster carer. There is an exception for foster carers where the child is a looked after child and the day care is part of the child's care plan. In these circumstances the day care provision falls under fostering regulations.

Foster carers can also provide day care for each other's children on a reciprocal basis where no payment is made and this will not be deemed as child minding or require the carer to be registered as a child minder.

Care must be taken when setting up day care arrangements to ensure they do not require the carer to be registered as a child minder.

Fostering day care payments for tax purposes are treated in line with fostering allowances.

33. Overnight Respite Care

- 6.119 Respite care is agreed when the needs of the child are assessed as being at such a level that the primary care giver(s) and family require periods of time where they do not look after the child. The objectives of respite are to maintain placement stability for the young person and to undertake work with the young person so that they are able to be more fully socially included integrate more fully into a family setting. Respite should be offered only when there are *exceptional needs* relating to the primary care givers capacity to continue in the caring role and is monitored and reviewed (every 12 weeks). The needs of the young person are central to any decisions that are made. A respite care agreement should be drawn up to ensure that arrangements for the support to the primary carer/s are broader than simply moving the child out of the placement.

- 6.120 In the event that a carer is unhappy about their assessed level of need for respite - the Head of Looked After Children Service can be asked to review the decision. Alternatively the foster carer can make a formal complaint.
- 6.121 Where a foster carer looks after a child in order to provide respite for either the child's family or another foster carer, payment in respect of the fostering allowance and any fee normally paid to the carer providing the respite care will be made for each overnight stay on a pro rata basis. An overnight stay is up to 24 hours (8pm to 8pm).
- 6.122 Where a stay exceeds a 24 hour period, but does not include a further overnight stay, payment for the provision of daytime respite care will apply for the period in excess of 24 hours.
- 6.123 The primary foster carer will continue to be paid provided that it is intended the child will return to that foster home. Fostering allowances and any fees payable should continue to be paid to the primary carer during respite periods unless a single period of respite exceeds 14 nights.
- 6.124 Respite foster carers are not required to set aside a proportion of the fostering allowance for long term savings. This proportion of the allowance should be used to maintain the child for the period of respite care.

34. Introduction Fee

- 6.125 Portsmouth City Council foster carers receive a one off Introduction Fee (see Appendix A) if they introduce a friend or family member to fostering for Portsmouth City Council.
- 6.126 The Introduction Fee is paid when the following three criteria have been met 1. The carer's name is put forward at the point of fostering enquiry 2. After the friend or family member they have introduced has been registered as a foster carer for Portsmouth City Council 3. When the friend or family member they have introduced takes their first foster placement.

35. Foster Carer's Leave

- 6.127 The holiday year runs from 1st April to the 31st March (the financial year).
- 6.128 All foster carers can request a break from fostering. Any leave must be requested well in advance and dates must be agreed by the Service Leader or Team Leader within the fostering service before the foster carer makes any holiday arrangements. Leave cannot be guaranteed as officers must be able to identify an alternative carer who can meet the child's needs before they are able to agree the foster carer's holiday.
- 6.129 Some carers may choose to take a break (foster carer's leave) between placements. Where possible this is the preferred approach in order to minimise disruption for the child.
- 6.130 A foster carer who has had a child/ren placed with them during the financial year will be entitled to take leave; standard, Level 1 and Level 2 carers are entitled to 14 nights leave

per year, per child. The amount of leave due will be pro-rated based on the length of time the child/ren has been placed with the carer. Standard, level 1 and level 2 carers are entitled to 14 nights leave per year, per child placed.

- 6.131 The payment amount for fostering leave is the same as carers have been entitled to in previous years, but has now been calculated to arrive at a nightly amount and will be paid over a 50 week period.
- 6.132 From the 01st April 2018 the annual fostering leave amount will be paid as a nightly supplement to the weekly standard fostering payment, and will appear separately on your remittance advice. The fostering leave rates will be dependent on the level of your skill fee payment and details can be found at Appendix A.
- 6.133 Under this arrangement, foster carers will accrue leave for each night that they foster a child and will receive a leave payment each week. This will remove the need for year-end adjustments. Carers may wish to save their payments for leave for the periods that they have a break in care.
- 6.134 Any carer choosing to take additional foster care leave for any reason would be able to do so, but this would be unpaid.

Level 3 Carers

- 6.135 Level 3 carers are able to claim up to 28 nights leave for each child placed during the year. Foster Care Leave is usually taken in a planned way and requested via their supervising social worker.
- 6.136 The payment is paid at half the full weekly rate for a level 3 carer, including the skill fee; for each child fostered during the year. From the 01st April 2018, the annual fostering leave amount will be paid as a nightly supplement to the weekly payment and paid over a 48 week period. The amount of leave due will be pro-rated based on the length of time the child/ren has been placed with the carer. The leave payment will appear separately on your remittance advice.
- 6.137 As outlined above, foster carers will accrue leave for each night that they foster a child and will receive a leave payment each week. This will remove the need for year-end adjustments Appendix A shows the fostering leave rates.
- 6.138 Foster Care leave can also be used to bridge gaps in placements. This payment will be calculated as above. Carers are expected to use their Foster Care Leave as part of good practice to ensure their own wellbeing. This will be monitored in supervision.
- 6.139 Where a carer is not taking leave, they should be advised to look at their own levels of well-being and self-management. Where carers need a break it is expected that Foster Care Leave will be paid rather than using respite.
- 6.140 Respite carers including Family Link Carers do not get leave allowances.
- 6.141 Carers who take more Foster Carer Leave than their allowance in consultation with the Supervising Social Worker, will be unpaid for the additional leave.

6.142 Lodgings Plus carers and Staying Put carers

Lodgings Plus carers for young people over 18 and Staying Put carers have no entitlement to leave as they are caring for adults who can make their own arrangements while their carer is away. However in some circumstances where Lodgings Plus carers are caring for looked after young people aged 16 and 17 years old up to 14 nights leave may be negotiated between the Lodgings Plus carer, Lodgings Plus Officer and the Head Looked After Children Service. The payment rate up to the maximum of half the full rate of allowances for the young people in placement must be agreed by the Head Looked After Children Service.

7 Mockingbird Pilot Project

- 36.1 Mockingbird hub home carers are fully approved foster carers who receive a combination of fostering allowances and fees for providing this service. Set criteria are used to assess a carer's suitability to be recruited as a Mockingbird home hub carer - these criteria are outlined in separate procedures (see Person Specification - Mockingbird Hub Carer Role).
- 36.2 Hub home carers are recognised as level 3 carers and receive A Mockingbird fee which is the equivalent of two level 3 fees per week when providing this service - this is paid regardless of a child receiving overnight care with the hub home carer or not. This is in recognition of the need for the hub home carer to have two fostering beds available for planned and emergency respite/sleepovers for children within the Mockingbird constellation.
- 36.3 In addition the hub home carer will receive the age related nightly fostering allowance and level 1 fee when they provide sleepovers/respite care to a child within the constellation (there is no additional payment for providing day care). No associated allowances (including travel) will be paid to the hub home carer as it is expected that these will be received by the child's main foster carer. Where a child within the constellation is not looked after (e.g. placed for adoption/rehabilitated home) the hub home carer will be paid the equivalent of the age related nightly fostering allowance for providing sleepovers.
- 36.4 Hub home carers receive £50 per week activities allowance for hosting social events and activities, and for providing support to satellite carers, as per the Hub Home Carer Agreement. Hub home carers are not required to submit receipts but must keep an account of spending to show and discuss with the Mockingbird Liaison Officer.
- 36.5 Hub home carers are entitled to 28 days annual leave per year. The Mockingbird fee will continue to be paid during this period.
- 36.6 A Hub home carer will receive the normal age related fostering allowance, level 1 skill fee, associated allowances (including travel), and their appraised skill fee for any looked after child/ren placed with a Hub home carer outside of the Mockingbird Programme.
- 36.7 Where a hub home carer is subject to an allegation and as a result cannot provide this service the carer will continue to receive the Mockingbird fee for a period of up to 28 nights. This is intended to ensure that carers do not suffer undue financial hardship as a result of an allegation having been made against them. Should an investigation still be

ongoing after the 28 night period, the situation will be referred to the Head of Service for Looked After Children for a decision regarding continuing any payment. Portsmouth City Council has the authority to cease these payments at any point; for example where a foster carer has been formally charged by the police in connection with an allegation or where the carer resigns from the fostering agency.

- 36.8 Should the Hub home carer be unable to provide this service for any other reason any ongoing Mockingbird payments will be at the discretion of the Head of Service for Looked After Children.

APPENDIX A - Table of Allowances and Fees 2020-2021

Effective from: 01 April 2020

Portsmouth City Council's Standard Fostering Allowance - weekly rates

Age band	Total standard fostering allowance	Pocket money element of standard fostering allowance	Clothing element of standard fostering allowance	Long term savings element of standard fostering allowance	* Payment to young person - personal allowance (deducted at source)	Total payment to carer (minus personal allowance paid direct to young person)
0-4	£150.00	£3.30	£25.60	£5.20	-	£150.00
5-10	£166.00	£8.41	£31.25	£5.20	-	£166.00
11-15	£189.00	£13.54	£46.88	£8.20	-	£189.00
16-17	£222.00	18.13*	£15.65*	£8.20	£33.78 (includes clothing & pocket money element)	£188.22

Annual School Holiday Allowance*

Age Band	Annual allowance
0-4	£300.00
5-10	£332.00
11-15	£378.00
16 years	£444.00

* Payment split into two parts (Easter Holiday 25%, Summer Holiday 75%).

Birthday and Annual Festivity Allowance

Age Band	Allowance
0-4 Years	£150.00
5-10 Years	£166.00
11-15 Years	£189.00
16-18 Years	£222.00

16 and 17 year old Young People & Independent Living

For young people (aged 16 & 17) in foster homes who have left school & young people unemployed or in full-time education (excluding youth training)	
Personal Allowance (per week)	£33.78
Independent Living - personal allowance (per week)	£57.90
Independent Living - expected contribution to water rates and TV licence (per week)	£8.93

Day Care Rates

AGE Band	UP TO 4 HOURS				4 HOURS & ABOVE			
	Standard Allowance	Level 1 payment, incl. fee	Level 2 payment, incl. fee	Level 3 payment, incl. fee	Standard Allowance	Level 1 payment, incl. fee	Level 2 payment, incl. fee	Level 3 payment, incl. fee
0-4	10.71	12.91	23.98	34.34	21.43	25.83	47.97	68.69
5-10	11.86	12.34	23.41	33.77	23.71	24.68	46.82	67.53
11-15	13.50	15.33	26.40	36.76	27.00	30.65	52.79	73.51
16-17	13.44	16.19	27.26	37.62	26.89	32.38	54.52	75.24

Foster Carers Leave

Amounts shown in the table below are nightly amounts

	0 - 4	5 - 10	11 - 15	16 - 17
	£	£	£	£
Standard	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
Level 1	0.57	0.57	0.57	0.57
Level 2	1.01	1.01	1.01	1.01
Level 3	2.86	2.81	3.06	3.13



Other rates and allowances

Mileage rate	£0.45 per mile
Weekly Travel Allowance - 25 miles @ 0.45p	£11.25
Discretionary Holiday Allowance (maximum per child, per annum)	£500
Educational Journey's & Holidays (maximum amount per child, per year)	£150
Maximum amounts for payment to support a new school uniform in mainstream and special schools: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Primary / Junior Schools• Secondary Schools	£50 £75
Babysitting – under 4 hrs Max.	£14.18
Babysitting – over 4 hrs, less than 12 hours Max.	£28.35
On Call Emergency Payment Fee (per night)	£15
Introduction Fee	£500
Fee for replacement end of year tax statement (per copy)	£25
Fee for printing and postage of replacement remittance (per copy)	£5

Level 1 Allowance & Skill Fees

Age band	Weekly standard fostering allowance	Weekly Level 1 Fee	Weekly level 1 fee enhancement	Total weekly Level 1 payment
0-4	£150.00	£2.86	£27.94	£180.80
5-10	£166.00	£6.73	-	£172.73
11-15	£189.00	£25.58	-	£214.58
16-17	£222.00	£38.44	-	£260.44*

*note PA element of £33.78 will be paid direct to young person.

Level 2 Allowance & Skill Fees

Age band	Weekly standard fostering allowance	Weekly Level 1 fee (including enhancement)	Weekly Level 2 Fee	Total weekly Level 2 payment (standard fostering allowance plus Level 1 and level 2 fee)
0-4	£150.00	£30.80	£154.98	£335.78
5-10	£166.00	£6.73	£154.98	£327.71
11-15	£189.00	£25.58	£154.98	£369.56
16-17	£222.00	£38.44	£154.98	£415.42*

*note PA element of £33.78 will be paid direct to young person.

Level 3 Allowance & Skill Fees

Age band	Weekly standard fostering allowance	Weekly Level 1 Fee (including enhancement)	Weekly Level 3 fee	Total weekly Level 3 payment (standard fostering allowance plus Level 1 and level 3 fee)
0-4	£150.00	£30.80	£300.00	£480.80
5-10	£166.00	£6.73	£300.00	£472.73
11-15	£189.00	£25.58	£300.00	£514.58
16-17	£222.00	£38.44	£300.00	£560.44*

*note PA element of £33.78 will be paid direct to young person.

Mockingbird Model Hub Carer Payments

	Weekly Rate Payable
Fee Payment	£600.00
Activity Allowance	£50.00

Family Link

Period of care	Payment Rate
Up to 4 hours	£22.29
4 - 8 hours	£46.75
8 - 12 hours	£66.90
12 - 24 hours (overnight care)	£108.34

Parent and Child Scheme

	Weekly Rate Payable	Additional Allowances
Parent looked after - 16 + fostering allowance (additional parent if LAC paid at same rate) plus level 1 fee	£260.44	Birthday and religious festival allowance paid in line with all LAC
Non-LAC parent - lodgings plus meal allowance rate (additional parent if non-LAC paid at same rate)	£185.20	None
Child LAC - age related fostering allowance rate (additional children paid at same rate) plus level 1 fee	Variable according to child's age	Birthday and religious festival allowance paid in line with all LAC
Child non-LAC - fostering allowance rate (additional children paid at same rate) plus level 1 fee	Variable according to child's age	None
Professional fee/supervision of placement - 1 parent	£600.00	None
Additional parent supervision fee - where 2 parents in placement	£300.00	None



Lodgings Plus

Description	Per Night	Per Week
Lodgings element	£22.39	£156.76
Personal Allowance ^{1,2}	£3.76	£26.33
Clothing ³	£2.24	£15.65
Where a young person is "Looked After" but has no Foster Carer, 3 rd meal allowance is paid direct to the landlord, who is responsible for paying the young person, or providing a good meal. Meal Allowance	£4.06	£28.44

- 1. Includes weekly long term savings amount of £8.20.**
- 2. Personal allowances tend to be paid directly to the young person, but may in certain circumstances be paid via the carer.**
- 3. The clothing allowance tend to be paid directly to the young person, but may in certain circumstances be paid via the carer.**



APPENDIX B - Minimum Clothing Requirement for young people in foster care

Casual

1	x	jacket (lightweight or winter)
4 pairs	x	jeans/casual leg wear/skirts
2	x	sweatshirts
3	x	t-shirts
1	x	gloves
2	x	shorts
1	x	swimwear

General

2	x	trainers/footwear
7	x	pants/underwear
7	x	bras
7	x	socks
1 pair	x	slippers
2 pairs	x	pyjamas/night-dress
1	x	dressing gown

Best

1	x	trousers/skirt
1	x	shirt/blouse/top
1	x	jumper

School

2	x	trousers/skirt
2	x	shirt/blouse
2	x	jumpers
1 pair	x	shoes
1	x	PE Kit

For respite arrangements the above would not be applicable as the expectation is that clothing would be brought with the child from their primary carer.

APPENDIX C SKILL LEVELS AND RESPITE CARE

Standard fostering allowance and Skill Level 1

It is recognised that all children and young people will exhibit some level of traumatised behaviour as a result of living away from their parents. All foster carers will be trained and supported to manage this behaviour appropriately. Level 1 carers are usually those early in their fostering career and as such would not usually be matched to more complex children and young people. However where it becomes apparent that more complex children have been placed carers may need respite care to be provided as part of a package in order to continue to offer a stable placement. In order to be considered for respite care then children would need to exhibit at least 2 of the following complex behaviours to a medium to severe level.

- Significant emotional difficulties displayed in behaviour difficulties such as soiling, school refusal
- Significant behavioural difficulties such as high risk behaviour, cruelty to animals, destructive behaviour
- Attachment disorders - lack of or unstable / poor relationships
- Persistent offending or serious offending
- School refusal or exclusion
- Inappropriate sexualised behaviour
- Substance misuse
- Self-harm & suicidal behaviour
- Significant aggressive behaviour
- Have communication & social difficulties associated with Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- Persistent runaways
- Complex & higher level personal care & support needs
- Have volatile medical conditions or deteriorating illness including mental health
- Multiple placement breakdowns

A decision to provide respite care will be taken by the fostering Service Leader following consultation with the supervising social worker, the child's social worker and CAMHS and a respite agreement will be drawn up. Wherever respite care is provided the primary carer will continue to be paid for the child however at the end of the year any respite care will be deducted from any holiday due (so that the carer cannot be paid for both respite care and unused holiday). Respite care should always be provided as part of a support package, which may also include increased supervision, CAMHS support and training.

Level 2

It is recognised that all children and young people will exhibit some level of traumatised behaviour as a result of living away from their parents. All foster carers will be trained and supported to manage this behaviour appropriately. Level 2 carers will be experienced foster carers but unlike Level 3 carers may work and will not be expected to take the most complex children and young people. Where it becomes apparent that more complex children have been placed, carers may need respite care to be provided as part of a package in order to continue to offer a stable placement. In order to be considered for respite care then children would need to exhibit at least 3 of the following complex behaviours to a medium level to severe level.

- Significant emotional difficulties displayed in behaviour difficulties such as soiling, school refusal

- Significant behavioural difficulties such as high risk behaviour, cruelty to animals, destructive behaviour
- Attachment disorders - lack of or unstable / poor relationships
- Persistent offending or serious offending
- School refusal or exclusion
- Inappropriate sexualised behaviour
- Substance misuse
- Self-harm & suicidal behaviour
- Significant aggressive behaviour
- Have communication & social difficulties associated with Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- Persistent runaways
- Complex & higher level personal care & support needs
- Have volatile medical conditions or deteriorating illness including mental health
- Multiple placement breakdowns

A decision to provide respite care will be taken by the fostering Service Leader following consultation with the supervising social worker, the child's social worker and CAMHS and a respite agreement will be drawn up. Wherever respite care is provided the primary carer will continue to be paid for the child however at the end of the year any respite care will be deducted from any holiday due (so that the carer cannot be paid for both respite care and unused holiday). Respite care should always be provided as part of a support package, which may also include increased supervision, CAMHS support & training.

Level 3

Level 3 carers are recruited to provide a foster service to the most vulnerable & needy young people in the Portsmouth city area. They will be professional carers of which at least one member of the household will be at home in order to focus primarily on the needs of a complex child. Level 3 carers will have experience of working with disadvantaged groups who are provided with high levels of support and assistance by the fostering service and from other professionals. Level 3 carers are expected to work with young people who have the following challenging types of behaviour:

- Significant emotional difficulties displayed in behaviour difficulties such as soiling, school refusal
- Significant behavioural difficulties such as high risk behaviour, cruelty to animals, destructive behaviour
- Attachment disorders - lack of or unstable / poor relationships
- Persistent offending or serious offending
- School refusal or exclusion
- Inappropriate sexualised behaviour
- Substance misuse
- Self-harm & suicidal behaviour
- Significant aggressive behaviour
- Have communication & social difficulties associated with Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- Persistent runaways
- Complex & higher level personal care & support needs
- Have volatile medical conditions or deteriorating illness including mental health
- Multiple placement breakdowns

There is an expectation that Level 3 carers will be the most experienced and the most able to work with challenging behaviour. It is recognised that there are some young people whose life experiences, disability and vulnerabilities make it very difficult to be cared for in a family without a package of respite being considered. In order to be considered for respite care then children and young people would need to exhibit at least 3 of the complex behaviours above to a higher level and where there is a clear multi-agency response and intervention in place.

A decision to provide respite care will be taken by the fostering Service Leader following consultation with the supervising social worker, the child's social worker and CAMHS and a respite agreement will be drawn up. Wherever respite care is provided the primary carer will continue to be paid for the child however at the end of the year any respite care will be deducted from any holiday due (so that the carer cannot be paid for both respite care and unused holiday). Respite care should always be provided as part of a support package, which may also include increased supervision, CAMHS support and training.

APPENDIX D - Savings Guidance

1 Savings Amount

- 1.1 There is an expectation that all short and long term foster carers (including temporary foster carers) will save a minimum of £5.20 under 11 and £8.20 11+ per week per LAC in addition to pocket money/personal allowance which is given to the child/young person directly.
- 1.2 Respite foster carers are not required to set aside a proportion of the fostering allowance for long term savings. This proportion of the allowance should be used to maintain the child for the period of respite care.
- 1.3 Savings day will be on a Saturday so savings would need to start to be put aside for any child that is in placement with a foster carer for a full week which starts on a Sunday and ends on a Saturday. E.g. if a child arrives on a Monday then the carer does not start saving for them until the second Saturday.
- 1.4 When a child is absent from their foster home for whatever reason the foster carer should continue to make long term savings on behalf of the child if they continue to be in receipt of the full standard fostering allowance for the child.
- 1.5 The weekly standard fostering allowance includes an amount that should be set aside as long term savings for the child. As this amount is a proportion of the standard fostering allowance (Government National Minimum South East Fostering Allowance Rates) the amount set aside for long term savings is considered income by the Inland Revenue.

2 Opening a Savings Account

- 2.1 Since the 1st August 2016 it has been the expectation that all foster carers open savings accounts for the children already in their care if they do not already have an account.
- 2.2 If the child or young person does not already have a savings account which they do not have direct access to, then a savings account should be opened for them. This should be started after 4 weeks of savings unless the plan is for them to return home within the first 8 weeks of being in care.
- 2.3 Where a child returns home within 8 weeks the expectation is that the accumulated savings are spent with the child before the child leaves. The carer should record in their daily contact sheets how the savings have been used.
- 2.4 The child should have a savings account which is in the child's name (NOT THE FOSTER CARERS) with the foster carer as the person who is the signatory (NOT THE CHILD). The savings account address needs to be the foster placement address. The foster carer needs to ensure when they choose the type of account

that it is easy to change the name of the signatory and the address for this particular savings account.

2.5 In order to open a savings account foster carers will need some identification for them and the child. Each Bank or building society expects different types so it will be necessary to check with them. Most Banks/Building Societies will accept a standard letter from the child's social worker explaining that the child is in care, and a recent photo of the child or a birth certificate, or passport for the child. The bank or building society will also need to have some ID for the carer which includes proof of their address and previous address for the child.

2.6 Foster carers can choose which Bank or Building Society to open the savings account with.

2.7 Nat West have a LAC adviser - Claire Green 07711762994 and they are particularly good with UASC's who do not know their previous address or do not have official ID.

2.8 Halifax offer good rates on Children's accounts.

3 Existing savings held by the local authority on behalf of the child

3.1 The local authority has been saving on behalf of Children since 1st April 2013 until 1 August 2016, when the policy changed, and therefore holds balances for Looked after Children in our accounts.

3.2 The child's social worker should discuss any historical balance of funds held by the council with the foster carer and the young person (where age appropriate) so that the carer and young person are aware of the balance of the young person's savings held by the council.

3.3 The funds will not be transferred into the child's bank account but can be used to fund appropriate expenditure in agreement with the child's social worker.

3.4 Once agreement has been reached the local authority will procure the goods or services on behalf of the child.

3.5 Cash can be accessed for small items of expenditure up to a maximum of £200 also in agreement with the social worker.

3.6 The young person and foster carer should always be informed if the young person's savings are to be used to fund an item and updated regarding the remaining balance. The young person should have the choice to forgo an item if they would prefer not to use their savings. However this does not mean that the item will be funded by the department where the young person has sufficient savings but does not wish to use them.

4 Monitoring the Account

- 4.1 PCC want to delegate savings to foster carers but equally need to ensure that foster carers are protected from misunderstandings regarding this money.
- 4.2 The foster carer is responsible for keeping evidence of weekly savings to the account which may be made weekly or monthly (4x weekly amount) by paying into the account in a branch or by standing order.
- 4.3 The account will be monitored by the Fostering Supervising Social Worker who should see evidence that a new savings account has been opened where necessary.
- 4.4 Supervising Social Workers should check the balance of the account by seeing a balance print out or statement in January, April, July and October supervision. This should be seen and amounts recorded in the carer's supervision for each child.

5 Spending Savings

- 5.1 Carers would be expected to plan spending with Children / Young People and should be recording large purchases (over £50) in their regular daily recording. The carer should also keep receipts for large purchases (over £50) in order to safeguard against damage and the guarantee. These receipts should be accessible if needed to claim against the guarantee or to evidence the cost if requested. Any spending over £200 needs to be discussed with a social worker and recorded as such in the carers recording and by the social worker on the child's file.
- 5.2 Children and Young people will want to save for different things, items that could be bought with savings will include part or full payments for bikes, mopeds, computers, driving lessons, expensive school trips over and above what pupil premium funds, theory test, savings towards post 18 costs for young people who will be able to manage this, special interest events, and spending money for holidays or costs for holidays outside of the foster family. This list is a guide and foster carers may agree items outside of it.
- 5.3 When the child is known to have damaged goods or property all or some money could come from children's savings to replace this but this must always be discussed and agreed with the Supervising Social Worker and the Child's Social Worker as this will be contentious for the child and potentially their parents.

6 When a Child Changes placement

- 6.1 When the current carer knows that the child is leaving they should obtain the correct form from the bank to change the signatory and address and take this to the pre-

placement meeting and hand the signed form to the new carer along with account details and any book associated with the account.

- 6.2 When children move in an emergency the previous foster carer has the responsibility of obtaining the form to transfer the signatory and address and signing this and giving it to their supervising social worker within 4 weeks of the child leaving the placement.
- 6.3 It is the carers responsibility for cancelling payment to the child's savings account when they move and any additional money paid to the child after the move cannot be reclaimed from the child or new carer.
- 6.4 When a child changes placement long term savings must be on the agenda at the Placement Agreement meeting with the new carer. Transfer of signatory and address to the new carer should be discussed to ensure a smooth handover. It is the expectation that within 4 weeks of commencement of the placement the new carer is able to start depositing long term savings into the child's account, including any balance of savings from the first 4 weeks. If there are any difficulties with transferring account signatory/address it is the responsibility of the fostering social worker to resolve this with the previous foster carer, child's social worker and savings account if necessary.
- 6.5 There is the same expectation for young people transferring from IFA placements to PCC carers. In these cases the Placement Agreement meeting should discuss who will take responsibility for negotiating the transfer of the young person's long term savings from the IFA to the new carer within 4 weeks of placement. Where there is a problem in relation to the IFA transferring savings this should be brought the attention of Karen Ebdon, Contracts Manager for resolution.

7 When a Child moves out of care.

- 7.1 When Children move away from their foster carer out of care for any reason other than to independence then the foster carer should work with the Child's Social Worker to plan the spending of the savings to reduce the amount left in the account to no more than £20. Once the account contains less than £20 the account should be left open and signed over to the adult taking over care of the child.
- 7.2 It is expected that any savings over £20 will be spent to aid the transition out of care. It is likely that items that the child had prior to coming into care will no longer be age appropriate and as such the savings could be used to replace these items. This could include bedding, activities, and special items of furniture, television, games console, books, toys and any other items that the foster carer, new carer and the Social Worker consider appropriate.

7.3 When children leave care in an unplanned way the foster carer will purchase the agreed items for the child within 4 weeks of the child leaving their care and provide all receipts to the social worker to be held on the child's file to safeguard the foster carer.

7.4 If this is not possible then the foster carer must sign the savings over to the social worker. The Social Worker will ensure that the savings are spent on items for the child and obtain receipts for all purchases and hold these on the child's file. Any savings accounts holding amounts up to £200 will be spent within 4 weeks of the Social Worker gaining access to the account and any accounts holding over £200 will be spent within 12 weeks.

8 When Children move to Independence.

8.1 When children are 15 and 9 months a discussion needs to be had between the foster carer and the social worker (and Personal Advisor if allocated) as to whether the young person will be able to manage the current amount of savings when they become independent and if not a spending plan is to be drawn up so that it is at an amount manageable to the young person when they take the account over which must occur on their 18th birthday.

8.2 For young people who are currently over 15 and 9 months this discussion needs to take place ASAP.

8.3 Young people who live independently and are under 18 may have their savings managed by their social worker and PA as signatories if they are not considered to be responsible enough to manage the amount of savings in their account.

Person Specification - Mockingbird Hub Carer Role

- **Mockingbird Hub Carer Roles and Responsibilities**

As part of our Mockingbird programme, Portsmouth Children Services are recruiting a full time, Mockingbird Hub Carer. The Mockingbird Hub Carer will offer sleepovers, peer support, emergency support, joint planning and social activities to satellite homes within their geographical area. Mockingbird uses the concept of a "constellation" which is where 6-10 "satellite" families of foster carers live in close proximity to a dedicated hub home offering this support.

- **Building a sense of community and belonging**

The hub home is at its most effective when children and young people see themselves as part of the household rather than as guests. Satellite carers must also feel comfortable in the hub home and should feel a valued member of the constellation community. The relationships formed within this constellation are central to Mockingbird, with the hub carer and satellite carers all working in partnership with one another. The hub empowers families to support each other and overcome problems before they escalate, and offers children a more positive experience of care through a wider support network of adults. The hub also builds links with other families important to the children's care plans and to resources within the wider community which can provide them with enhanced opportunities to learn, develop and succeed.

The role of the Mockingbird hub carer is crucial to the success of the programme. It can be rewarding but also demanding and unpredictable. It is a full-time role for approved foster carers in view of the organisation and planning needed to make a constellation work effectively and the 'hands on' day-to-day care of children and young people staying at the hub home for sleepovers or being reintegrated back into their satellite fostering. Hub home carers will have completed their preparation training, post approval induction period and the national Training Support and Development Standards. They will have experience of creating comfortable home environments and will need the ability to develop relationships with children of different ages, ethnicities and genders. They must be prepared to build a strong and collaborative professional relationship with the liaison worker.

A key factor in the success of the hub home service is the Mockingbird hub carers' understanding of the constellation as a form of extended family and their own role as one of leadership and as a model of good practice. Mockingbird hub carers act as the glue that unites the satellite families into a community.

- **Stable relationships**

Hub home carers need to be energetic and resourceful with emotional stability and adequate sources of support. Mockingbird is about working to foster a sense of community, with Mockingbird hub carers facilitating a constellation to act as a resource for itself, offering hope, a sense of belonging with the reassurance that comes with that, sharing information and ideas about how best to support children and young people's development and how best to respond to challenging behaviour.

- **Advocacy**

The need for advocacy skills may arise in many ways. Mockingbird hub carers may need to advocate to a foster carer on behalf of a child or young person, or to the Fostering Service or Child Care Team on behalf of members of the Constellation. They may ask to participate in family meetings or reviews about a particular child or young person's needs. The task of being supportive while remaining neutral towards everyone in the constellation can be a complex balance requiring reflective skills and a willingness to seek advice.

The Hub Home and foster families have to communicate effectively to ensure there is continuity in safer caring practice and in what behaviour is expected of children and young people while they are at the Hub Home.

- **Flexibility**

Hub home foster carers will often have to adjust their plans to deal with unpredictable events. Examples of the type of flexibility that might be required:

- Accommodate requests for urgent support care from satellite families which can include sleepovers for the child
- Accommodate children and young people's schedules
- Provide transport for families to attend activities at the hub home
- Host contact sessions for birth families
- Work around satellite families schedules when setting up times to talk

The Mockingbird hub carer role is usually undertaken by foster carers who have a considerable amount of spare time due to the 24/7 nature of the work. Like all foster carers they should have stable and healthy relationships with everyone already present in their home including any foster child already in placement.

Those in the role will often face challenging and emotionally exhausting situations and often see foster families seek a great deal of emotional and practical support from the Mockingbird Hub Carers. To cope with these demands the Mockingbird hub carers need, if they are a couple, to be confident in their own relationship and able to seek support from other sources when necessary in order to maintain the energy and creativity needed to support the constellation. However, this role can be undertaken by a single carer if they have a good support network around them.

- **Ability to plan, organise and implement**

Hub home carers must be able to plan, co-ordinate schedules and organise events. They need to be creative and flexible in encouraging satellite home families to participate in events.

- **Confidence in mediating and dealing with conflict**

Hub home carers provide support care to satellite families in times of conflict. This support may happen in the hub or satellite home and may include an unplanned sleepover with the intention of

the child or young person returning to the satellite home as soon as the conflict is resolved. Emergency support is offered through clearly defined delegated authority and under appropriate supervision.

The hub home offers a neutral, safe space where children and young people and their satellite carers can work out where they are in their relationship, express their feelings in appropriate ways and communicate in a potentially fraught situation.

- **Regular contact with satellite home families and safer caring for everyone**

The hub home carer will be proactive in maintaining contact and regularly checking in with satellite home families. By maintaining regular contact, hub home carers will be aware of changes in the satellite home families, new problems or escalating difficulties that need to be discussed with all relevant members of the team around the child. They will be able to plan and offer support with the aim of averting crisis situations or placement breakdowns.

- **Organising activities and events**

The hub home carers will be responsible for maintaining and coordinating a calendar of monthly events, meetings, social gatherings, training, support session's activities for children and young people, and their own availability for sleepovers and planned respite. These shared events build and sustain a community. The following activities are essential components of Mockingbird:

- Monthly constellation meetings or training and support sessions
- Social get-togethers
- Children and young people's activities

The constellation calendar also may include relevant local community activities or school events that families may want to attend.

- **Support care and sleepovers**

The hub home carer needs to subscribe to the idea that some time out away from the intensity of close family relationships, as well as the need to have different positive individuals in our lives, is normal and healthy. It also promotes stronger, healthier relationships with the people that we are closest to.

This sort of distancing has a healthy developmental and restorative function, even when relationships are unproblematic. Many individuals achieve this through solitary activities such as reading, exercise or listening to music. However, looked after children and young people may have less freedom for their own protection and may have many more scheduled activities (contact, CAMHS, care planning, PEP meetings and others) which all combine to a very busy life and can create tensions. Therefore it is important that children and young people and their carers should have access 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to planned and emergency support care.

- **Planned support care**

Satellite home carers can arrange planned respite care provided by the hub home family. The hub home carers should plan ahead to let satellite families know when they will not be available to provide this service. This includes overnight sleepovers and shorter periods, for example, after school or transport to and from activities.

- **Crisis support care**

The satellite home carers may call the hub home carers directly in a crisis situation to request urgent respite. The hub home can offer it on the basis of agreed prior delegated authority for decision making. The model is designed to enable immediate support to satellite families, while increasing the ability of everyone to work effectively during the crisis. Examples of short notice respite situations may include a satellite carer's need to:

- drop off one child/young person while another child/young person is taken to an emergency doctor appointment
- Drop off children/young people while dealing with own health emergency
- Have children/young people picked up from an external event and taken home for a few hours while dealing with a short-term crisis
- Have a few hours of respite to recover composure when a child/young person is being very challenging
- Arrange for a child or young person to stay overnight at the hub home due to unforeseen emergencies or the escalation of tensions in the satellite home.

- **Temporary placement in a disruption**

The hub home is the preferred location for children and young people whose placements have to end suddenly or prematurely whatever the reason. Children and young people may stay in the hub home for an agreed extended period of time while a new placement is being agreed. In this situation it is hoped that the new placement may be with a family already in the constellation, or a new family may be able to join the constellation. This enables the young person to maintain important links with the hub home and other adults, children and young people in the constellation.

- **Keep connected**

Maintaining good relationships matters more than anything else for children in care, it can be damaging to children when strong relationships are broken. This can occur when children and young people move into a permanent placement, return to their birth family, through adoption or by leaving care. In some instances young people and previous foster carers are prevented from maintaining contact against both their wishes.

The Mockingbird programme provides stable environments and secure attachments for children in short and long term placements and hub home carers can play a vital role advocating for children and their former foster carers to maintain a relationship. Hub home carers, in discussion with the fostering service, may also be able to support this ongoing connection by inviting young people and their families to occasional constellation social events. This enables a lighter touch connection,

allowing children and young people to transition to a new living situation without experiencing loss of important relationships.

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