

PORTSMOUTH CITY COUNCIL
Fostering, Staying Put, Family Link
and Lodgings Plus Allowances (LAC)
for 2016 - 2017

Effective Date: 01 August 2016
Next Review Date: 01 August 2017

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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 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 the Inland Revenue. In April 2003 new Tax Relief measures were introduced. Further information on this can be accessed from the Fostering Network website: <https://www.fostering.net/all-about-fostering/foster-carers/finances/income-tax>
- 1.12. A useful on line course for foster carers regarding tax matters is available from the Inland Revenue 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 4, Floor 4 Civic Offices) for audit purposes.

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

- 2.1. When young people reach 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.
- 2.2. 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.

- 2.3. 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).
- 2.4. 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.
- 2.5. 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).
- 2.6. 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.

2.7. 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.

- 2.8. 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.
- 2.9. 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.

2.10. 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.

2.11. 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.

2.12. 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.

2.13. **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.

2.14. 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).

2.15. **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.

2.16. 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.

2.17. 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.

2.18. 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.

2.19. 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.

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

2.21. 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.

2.22. 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.

2.23. 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.

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

2.25. 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.

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

2.27. 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.

2.28. 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' DfE, DWP and HMRC Guidance

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

3. Savings

- 3.1. 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.
- 3.2. 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. 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.
- 3.3. 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.

4. Payment and Over Payment Policy

- 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 current week (Sunday - Saturday) directly into the carer's bank account by BACS. 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 paid for the standard Fostering allowance will be deducted from the carers next payment on PCC's electronic payment system. Receipts for initial clothing must be returned to the Finance Team (Core 4, Floor 4 Civic Offices) within 14 days of receiving the cash payment. Failure to do so may result in the payment being deducted from the carers next fostering allowance payment.
- 4.5 Receipts are required for any payment for expenses paid by cash or through Portsmouth City Council's electronic payment system. This is an Audit requirement. All receipts should be forwarded onto the Finance Team (Core 4, Floor 4 Civic Offices) within 14 days of purchase.
- 4.6 All overpayments made to foster carer's, Care Leaver's, prospective adopters, Adoptive and Residence Order Carer's, Special Guardianship Orders, Supportive Lodgings, Landlords, young people in receipt of Personal Allowances and Regulation 24 or 25 carer's, or anyone in receipt of a payment must repay overpayments in full.
- 4.7 Any overpayments of 3 nights or less, or payments for expenses, will be automatically recovered. If you know that a placement has ended, please contact the Finance Team (Core 4, Floor 4 Civic Offices) immediately. This number is also printed weekly on your Remittance slips.
- 4.8 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. A CC12 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 4, Floor 4 Civic Offices) within 14 days of purchase.
- 4.9 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.
- 4.10 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.
- 4.11 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 Absences from the foster home

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 **Payments to carers where young person removed due to an allegation made against a foster carer or member of the fostering household.**
- 5.6 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.
- 5.7 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.
- 5.8 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.

5.9 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.

5.10 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.

5.11 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).

6. Annual School Holiday Allowance

- 6.1 The Annual School Holiday allowance, equivalent to two weeks standard fostering allowance, is paid to cover additional expenses during the school holidays. The main school holidays are Easter (2 weeks) and the summer holiday (6 weeks). The allowance is divided into two parts and is paid automatically at the beginning of the Easter and Summer Holidays.
- 6.2 This allowance is to cover the holiday period and therefore if a child moves between carers for all or some of the holiday the corresponding allowance should move with them and will either be handed between carers or stopped from the previous carer and paid to the new carer via PCC. Where a child moves placement and the carer has already spent the money on an activity for the child earlier in the year then as long as proof of purchase can be provided the money will not be expected to be repaid or handed over. No further holiday allowance can be paid to the new carer.

7. 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.

8. Discretionary allowances for holidays

- 8.1 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.
- 8.2 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).**

9. Educational Journeys and Holidays

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 Payments under this arrangement are generally capped (see Appendix A) and only one trip per child will be supported each year.
- 9.3 Requests for payment in excess of this level need to be agreed by the Head Looked After Children Service.

10. Other Additional Educational Costs

- 10.1 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.

11. Playgroup / Nursery Fees

- 11.1 Any entitlement to free nursery provision (currently 15 hours per week) should be utilised first before additional costs become payable.
- 11.2 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.

12. Birthday and Annual Festivity allowances

- 12.1 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.
- 12.2 The payment is expected to follow the child, therefore if the child moves placement after the payment has been made for 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.
- 12.3 If the child is being admitted into a Children's home or returning home the payment in FULL, MUST be returned to Portsmouth City Council. 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.

13. Initial Clothing Allowance

- 13.1 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.
- 13.2 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.
- 13.3 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

- 13.4 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.
- 13.5 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).

14. School Uniform

- 14.1 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-expectantly, 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.
- 14.2 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.
- 14.3 Where payment is required to support a new school uniform the expenditure will be capped at the levels shown in Appendix A.
- 14.4 These expenditure caps apply to both mainstream and special schools – each settings cap being calculated on the appropriate phase of educational provision.
- 14.5 Any requests for expenditure above these levels must be agreed with the Head Looked After Children Service before financial commitments are made.

15. Special Interests/ Hobbies

- 15.1 As this is already being paid within the weekly standard fostering allowance, no further payments will be paid.
- 15.2 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.

16. Spectacles/ Corrective Lenses

- 16.1 Expenditure for the full cost of frames for National Health Service lenses, or repairs to spectacles will be reimbursed when required.
- 16.2 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.
- 16.3 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.

17. Ethnic, Racial and Cultural Needs

- 17.1 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.
- 17.2 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.

18. Medical Issues

- 18.1 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.

19. Passports

- 19.1 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.
- 19.2 The foster carer will be expected to pay for the child's passport photographs from their weekly standard fostering allowance.

20. Bicycles

- 20.1 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.

- 20.2 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.
- 20.3 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 4, Floor 4 Civic Offices) for audit purposes.

21. Travel Expenses

- 21.1 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).
- 21.2 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.
- 21.3 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.
- 21.4 The weekly travel allowance included within the fostering allowance is the equivalent of 25 miles (see Appendix A).
- 21.5 As foster carers already receive a weekly payment equivalent to 25 miles 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.
- 21.6 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.
- 21.7 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.
- 21.8 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).

- 21.9 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.
- 21.10 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.
- 21.11 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 Head of Service, as per HMRC Regulations and will be processed ONLY when time allows. Carers should not deduct the initial 25 miles from their claim as this will be deducted automatically but should only claim if their weekly mileage is in excess of 25 miles.

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

- 22.1 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.

23. 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)

- 23.1 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.
- 23.2 The Babysitting rates (see Appendix A) apply ONLY ON production of a receipt as proof of the payment made.
- 23.3 Carers attending fostering training, events or meetings can claim 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.
- 23.4 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.

23.5 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.

24. Equipment On Loan

24.1 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).

24.2 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.

24.3 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.

24.4 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.

24.5 This service is limited to provide equipment that is essential to the young person's care.

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

25.1 Foster Carers should be insured for any loss or damage resulting from their foster carer activities.

25.2 Foster carers must inform their Insurance Company (Building, Contents and Car) that they are foster carers for Portsmouth City Council.

25.3 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.

25.4 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.

- 25.5 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.
- 25.6 In exceptional circumstances where the foster carer does not have insurance they can request an ex gratia payment as outlined above.
- 25.7 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.

26. Skill Fees

- 26.1 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.
- 26.2 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.

Level 1

- 26.3 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.
- 26.4 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.
- 26.5 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.
- 26.6 The Level 1 fee was set at the difference between the last published 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 is 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. The Level 1 fee will therefore vary according to the child's age band.

26.7 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.

26.8 See Appendix A for level of fees.

Level 2

26.9 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.

26.10 See Appendix A for level of fees.

Level 3

26.11 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.

26.12 See Appendix A for level of fees.

26.13 Specialist Fee

A specialist fee payment can be made on a case by case basis to foster carers undertaking care that exceeds the expectations of a level 3 carer e.g. children with severe disabilities requiring 24 hour/24/7 care. This fee is negotiated on a case by case basis and authorised by the Head Looked After Children Service.

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

27. Parent and Child Scheme

27.1 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.

27.2 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.

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

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

28. Family Link

28.1 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.

28.2 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.

28.3 See Appendix A for payment rates.

29. Lodgings Plus

29.1 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).

29.2 See Appendix A for the Lodgings Plus rates.

29.3 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)

29.4 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.

29.5 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.

29.6 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)

29.7 Young people in Lodgings Plus aged 18 plus

- 29.8 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.
- 29.9 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.
- 29.10 The above payments should amount to a weekly rate equivalent to the standard Lodgings Plus allowance including meal allowance and support element.

30. On-Call Emergency Placement Fee

- 30.1 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.

31. Day Time Only Respite Care - All Skills Levels

- 31.1 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.
- 31.2 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.
- 31.3 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.

32. Overnight Respite Care

- 32.1 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.
- 32.2 Respite care can be provided in addition to foster care leave but at the end of each year the paid respite care will be added to the foster care leave taken when calculating if there is any unused leave.
- 32.3 In the event that a carer is unhappy about their assessed level of need for respite - the Head Looked After Children Service can be asked to review the decision. Alternatively the foster carer can make a formal complaint.
- 32.4 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).
- 32.5 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.
- 32.6 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.

33. Introduction Fee

- 33.1 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.
- 33.2 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.

34. Foster Carer's Leave

- 34.1 All 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.
- 34.2 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.
- 34.3 A leave payment may be made for carers in receipt of Standard Fostering Allowances only, Standard Fostering Allowance plus Level 1 fee and Standard Fostering Allowances plus Level 2 fee as per the following calculation:
- 34.4 All fully approved short and long term foster carers including Level 1 and 2 foster carers will receive a maximum of 14 nights leave per year, or part year (for newly approved carers), pro rata the number of nights fostering they have undertaken during the year period (1st April to 31st March) up to the maximum of two placements per night.
- 34.5 Where carers have received the maximum 14 nights leave and cease to be registered as foster carers during that leave year any over payment of leave entitlement will need to be repaid.
- 34.6 Any carer who chooses not to take all or part of their holiday entitlement will receive the equivalent monetary value at the end of the financial year (31st March). The rate per night per child is calculated by taking the average of the 0 to 18 standard fostering age allowance plus the fee element normally received by the carer.
- 34.7 See table in Appendix A for payment rates - leave is calculated at Rate A for carers approved for 1 child and Rate B for carers approved for 2 or more children.
- 34.8 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

- 34.9 Level 3 carers are able to claim up to 28 nights leave. Foster Care Leave is usually taken in a planned way and recorded and will include long weekends or days away.
- 34.10 The payment is paid at half the full rate for a maximum of the first two children in placement.
- 34.11 Portsmouth City Council will only pay Foster Care Leave for a maximum of 2 children in placement, (who are currently in placement) but no more than 2 children i.e. there is a restriction to pay half the total fee and allowance for 2 children.
- 34.12 Foster Care leave can also be used to bridge gaps in placements. This payment will be calculated at half the full rate for the last child or two children in placement. 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 and recorded.

- 34.13 The holiday year runs from 1st April to the 31st March (the financial year).
- 34.14 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. If a carer does not use all the Foster Care Leave they can claim up to two weeks payment in lieu of leave at the end of the financial year. This will be calculated at half the rate per night per child calculated by taking the average from the 0 - 18 fostering age allowance rate plus half the fee element normally received by the carer. Any additional days will be lost. For new carers Foster Care Leave will be paid pro rata.
- 34.15 Respite carers including Family Link Carers do not get these allowances.
- 34.16 Carers who take more Foster Carer Leave than their allowance in consultation with the Supervising Social Worker, will be unpaid for the additional leave.
- 34.17 Lodgings Plus carers (Looked After Children)
14 Nights Leave per year from 1st April to the 31st March should be negotiated between the Lodgings Plus carer, Lodgings Plus Officer and the Head Looked After Children Service. This should be taken in a planned way and recorded and will include long weekends or days away. The payment rate up to the maximum of half the full rate of allowance for a maximum of two young people in placement must be agreed by the Head Looked After Children Service.



APPENDIX A - Table of Allowances and Fees 2016/2017
Effective from: 01 August 2016

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	£140.00	£3.30	£25.60	£5.20	-	£140.00
5-10	£156.00	£8.41	£31.25	£5.20	-	£156.00
11-15	£177.00	£13.54	£46.88	£8.20	-	£177.00
16-17	£208.00	18.13*	£15.65*	£8.20	£33.78 (includes clothing & pocket money element)	£174.22

Annual School Holiday Allowance*

Age Band	Annual allowance
0-4	£280
5-10	£312
11-15	£354
16 years	£416

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

Birthday and Annual Festivity Allowance

Age Band	Allowance
0-4 Years	£140.00
5-10 Years	£156.00
11-15 Years	£177.00
16-18 Years	£208.00



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	£10.00	£12.20	£23.27	£33.63	£20.00	£24.40	£46.54	£67.26
5-10	£11.14	£11.62	£22.69	£33.05	£22.29	£23.25	£45.39	£66.10
11-15	£12.64	£14.47	£25.54	£35.90	£25.29	£28.94	£51.08	£71.80
16-17	£12.44	£15.19	£26.26	£36.62	£24.89	£30.38	£52.52	£73.24

Foster Carers Leave

FOSTER CARERS LEAVE	Standard Fostering allowance Nightly Rate	Standard Fostering 'Capped Payment'	Level 1 Nightly Rate	Level 1 'Capped Payment'	Level 2 Nightly Rate	Level 2 'Capped Payment'
RATE A: approved for 1 child for 14 nights	£11.56	£161.81	£13.37	£187.19	£24.44	£342.17
RATE B: approved for 2 or more children for 14 nights	£23.12	£323.61	£26.74	£374.39	£48.88	£684.35



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	£250
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	£140.00	£2.86	£27.94	£170.80
5-10	£156.00	£6.73	-	£162.73
11-15	£177.00	£25.58	-	£202.58
16-17	£208.00	£38.44	-	£246.44*

*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	£140.00	£30.80	£154.98	£325.78
5-10	£156.00	£6.73	£154.98	£317.71
11-15	£177.00	£25.58	£154.98	£357.56
16-17	£208.00	£38.44	£154.98	£401.42*

*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	£140.00	£30.80	£300.00	£470.80
5-10	£156.00	£6.73	£300.00	£462.73
11-15	£177.00	£25.58	£300.00	£502.58
16-17	£208.00	£38.44	£300.00	£546.44*

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

Family Link

Period of care	Payment Rate
Up to 4 hours	£21.15
4 - 8 hours	£44.37
8 - 12 hours	£63.49
12 - 24 hours (overnight care)	£102.82

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	£246.44	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)	£177.23	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	£21.26	£148.79
Personal Allowance (paid to young person) *	£3.76	£26.33
Clothing (paid to young person)	£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
Lodgings + Meal Allowance	£25.32	£177.23
Lodgings + Personal Allowance (INCL. Clothing)	£27.25	£190.77
Lodgings + Personal Allowance + Meal Allowance	£31.31	£219.21

*** note: includes weekly long term savings amount of £8.20.**

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.