

Carers' Fees and Allowances Policy 2024/25



FosterPortsmouth



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difference to
their life....
....and yours

Content

| | |
|--|----|
| 1. Introduction | 4 |
| 2. Allowances | |
| • Fostering Allowance | 4 |
| • Exceptional Payments | 6 |
| • Emergency Clothing | 6 |
| • Birthday & Religious Festival | 7 |
| • Activities & Holiday | 7 |
| • Savings and Pocket Money | 8 |
| • School Related Clothing | 8 |
| 3. Skills Fees | 9 |
| 4. Specialist and Other Fees | |
| • Parent and Child | 10 |
| • Mockingbird Model of Care | 11 |
| • Out of Hours Carers | 12 |
| • Family Link Care | 12 |
| • Day Time only Foster Care | 13 |
| • Overnight Fostering Respite Care | 13 |
| • Family/Friends Relief Carers | 13 |
| 5. Supporting Young People over 18 | |
| • Supported Lodgings | 14 |
| • Staying Put | 14 |
| • Independence Training Flat | 15 |
| 6. Other Considerations for the Child | |
| • Travel | 16 |
| • Special Interests/ Hobbies | 16 |
| • Glasses/ Corrective Lenses | 17 |
| • Ethnic and Cultural Needs | 17 |
| • Education Costs | 17 |
| • Medical Issues | 17 |
| • Passports | 17 |
| • Bicycles | 17 |
| • 16/17 Young People | 18 |

7. Other Considerations for Foster Carers

- Refer a Friend 19
- Foster Carers' Leave 19
- Child/Young Person Temporarily not in a Foster Placement 19
- Home Furnishing and Equipment for Fostering 20
- Childcare and Travel Expenses for Attending Fostering Training 20

- Complaints and Allegations 20

8. Benefits, Tax and Insurance

- Child Benefit 20
- Disability Living Allowance 21
- Housing Allowance/Universal Credit 22
- Council Tax and Council Tax Benefit 22
- His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) 22
- Insurance 22

9. Payments and Expenses Issues

- Payments 23
- Overpayments 23
- Expenses 23
- Receipts 23

10. Appendices

- Appendix A - Table of Allowances and Fees 2024-25 24

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out the foster carers' (and related carers) allowances and skills fees and other payments that may be provided with guidance relating to how they are applied. The Allowances and Fees are summarised in Appendix A.
- 1.2 The document does not cover the situation where any carer subsequently obtains an Adoption, Child Arrangement or Special Guardianship Order. If such Orders are made, the Fostering Allowances will cease to apply, and the respective allowance policy should be referred to.

2. Allowances

2.1 Fostering Allowance

- 2.1.1 All Portsmouth City Council foster carers receive the weekly National Minimum Fostering Allowance for the South East which is reviewed annually. It should be noted that Portsmouth has combined the two lower bandings age banding into one (0-2; 2-4), paying the higher rate. This payment covers all costs in relation to looking after individual children and young people.

| 2024/25 | Age 0 to 4 | Age 5 to 10 | Age 11 to 15 | Age 16 to 17 |
|--------------|------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| Total | £189.00 | £208.00 | £238.00 | £278.00 |
| Savings | £6.26 | £6.26 | £9.87 | £9.87 |
| Pocket money | £3.97 | £10.11 | £16.28 | £21.81 |
| Clothing | £30.79 | £37.59 | £56.40 | £59.45 |
| Travel | £28.35 | £28.35 | £28.35 | £28.35 |

- 2.1.2 The fostering allowance is expected to cover the day-to-day costs of caring for a child.
- 2.1.3 Guidance is given in the table above for the proportion of clothing and pocket money. The amounts in the table for savings must be set aside for the child as a minimum. The travel element is transport costs related to supporting the child being cared for.
- 2.1.4 As part of moving towards independence, the foster carer can hand over the clothing and pocket money allowances directly to young people aged 16 and 17 with the agreement of the child, social worker, and foster carer.
- 2.1.5 A more detailed breakdown by expenditure of the fostering allowance has not been produced. This is based on the principle advocated by Fostering Network that an exact breakdown of allowances is overly prescriptive, and the expenditure should be made on the needs of the specific child and the foster carer using their professional judgment. Foster carers are not

expected to spend the total fostering allowance each week and should use some discretion to allocate proportions of the allowance depending on the needs of the child over the course of the year, for example holidays.

2.1.6 Whilst not an exhaustive list, the fostering allowance contributes towards costs such as:

2.1.7 The Fostering Home:

- New/replacement equipment and all general household wear and tear
- Household costs including utilities i.e., gas, electric, water, telephone, internet, home maintenance
- Home Insurance
- Car insurance (fully comprehensive)

2.1.8 Food:

- All food requirements
- Special dietary needs
- School meals/packed lunches

2.1.9 Toiletries and Personal Needs:

- All basic toiletries
- All basic skin and hair products
- Hairdressing
- Nappies
- Glasses and contact lenses

2.1.10 Clothing:

- All clothing needs, appropriate to season
- School uniform for primary and secondary school children
- Party/Celebration clothes, including prom costs
- Cultural Dress

2.1.11 Religious/cultural Needs:

- Prayer books/equipment
- Clothing for religious events
- Dietary needs
- Travel to place of worship

2.1.12 Telephone:

- Calls to child's family, friends
- Calls to Children's Services and other professionals
- Mobile contracts/top ups/Phone cards
- Internet

2.1.13 Travel:

- All transport costs related to supporting the child being cared for

2.1.14 Leisure and Out of School Activities:

- Recreational outings (including travel and entrance fees)
- Cinema and theatre tickets
- Clubs, hobbies, and leisure activities
- Musical equipment
- Play schemes, play group, holiday activity costs
- Toys, games and reading materials
- School day trips and activities
- Books, pens, pencils, crayons, paint, paper, etc
- Sports clothing and equipment *
- Basic play/toddler group and nursery fees outside of Government funded hours
- Family holidays (excluding the annual contribution for summer holiday activity which is included in the fostering allowance)

*Some sports clubs require specific named/branded kit and equipment which may incur an additional cost. A request for an exceptional payment may be made to the Supporting Children and Carers panel.

2.1.15 Other:

- Appropriate luggage i.e., suitcase
- Photos (including school prints)
- Presents for child's family and friends
- Babysitters if foster carers need to attend their own personal or recreational activities
- Pets
- Pocket money
- Savings

2.2 Exceptional Payments

2.2.1 The policy refers to all carer costs and expenses covered in the fostering allowances and skills fees. However, it is acknowledged that there may be some anomalies for which an exceptional payment will be considered and may be made.

2.2.2 Requests for any exceptional payments must be made in advance of the payment and will be considered and agreed at the Supporting Children and Carers' Panel held monthly and chaired by the Head of Service for Children We Care For.

2.3 Emergency Clothing

2.3.1 When a child initially becomes cared for or changes carer, it is the responsibility of the child's social worker to ensure that the child has adequate clothing brought from their home when placed. If the child does not have sufficient clothing, then an emergency clothing allowance can be considered, and the sum will be agreed with the social worker on an individual basis.

| Age band | Emergency clothing (up to) |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| 0–10 Years | £100.00 |
| 11-17 Years | £200.00 |

2.3.2 Any purchases using this allowance should be noted by the foster carer and receipts kept. The foster carer is responsible for maintaining and replacing the child's clothing (from their ongoing weekly fostering allowance) on an ongoing basis.

2.4 Birthday & Religious Festival

2.4.1 An amount equivalent to one week's age-related fostering allowance is paid to foster carers two weeks prior to a child's birthday, and one month prior to the relevant festival which for the majority of children we care for will be at Christmas. The allowances should be used to cover all associated expenses such as travel, a birthday party, special meal, trip out and to buy a gift for the child. Cash should not be given as a 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., mobile phone, musical instrument, or an activity such as horse riding or learning to drive.

2.4.2 Whilst the festival payment will usually be made prior to Christmas, it is acknowledged that children may wish to celebrate other festivals (for example Eid) throughout the calendar year, or a combination of different festivals. If that is the case, the carer will need to discuss and agree this with the child, and a request made for the payment to be made at a different time of year (at least a month in advance). The payment is expected to follow the child, therefore if the child moves fostering home after the payment has been made for a birthday or a religious festival, the previous foster carer must pass on the payment or presents in full to the next foster carer.

| Age band | Birthday & Festival |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| 0–4 Years | £189.00 |
| 5-10 Years | £208.00 |
| 11-15 Years | £238.00 |
| 16-18 Years | £278.00 |

2.4.3 Any purchases using this allowance should be noted by the foster carer and receipts kept.

2.5 Activities & Holiday

2.5.1 Activity Allowance

2.5.1.1 Two weeks fostering allowance is payable to foster carers to meet the additional costs of activities (also whilst on holiday) for children during school holiday periods.

| Age band | Activity Allowance |
|-----------------|---------------------------|
| 0-4 | £378.00 |
| 5-10 | £416.00 |
| 11-15 | £476.00 |
| 16-17 | £556.00 |

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

2.5.1.2 This payment is per child and therefore if the child moves foster home, any unused allowance will follow the child. As the allowance covers all periods of school holiday, if a child should move between foster carers for all or some of the holiday, the corresponding allowance should be passed on by the foster carer.

2.5.1.3 Any purchases using this allowance should be noted by the foster carer and receipts kept.

2.5.2 Holiday Allowance

2.5.2.1 A holiday allowance up to £500 per financial year per child is payable for a contribution to holidays of a minimum of seven nights in the UK or abroad, taken during school holidays only.

2.5.2.2 Foster carers must not arrange to take children out of school during term unless an exception (for example family events such as a wedding) has been agreed by the Deputy Director. If agreed by the Deputy Director, the Holiday Allowance will be paid.

2.6 **Savings & Pocket Money**

2.6.1 Foster carers should promote and encourage good money management for the children they are caring for. As part of the fostering allowance, there is an element for the child's pocket money and savings.

2.6.2 Savings

2.6.2.1 Foster carers must set aside long-term savings per child, regardless of the child's age. If the child does not have a savings account, the foster carer will need to open one and deposit savings into the account. This should be an account separate to the foster carers own personal account. The savings amount will need to move with the child if/when they move on. Respite carers are not required to set aside a proportion of the fostering allowance for long-term savings.

2.6.3 Pocket Money

2.6.3.1 All children will receive weekly pocket money and will be taken out of the fostering allowance.

2.7 **School Related Clothing**

2.7.1 Payment will be made to support a school uniform if the child starts a new school within six months of living with the foster carers, changes schools unexpectedly, or if the child moves to an alternative foster carer and does not have adequate school uniform. It should be noted that if a child has been living with the foster carer for over 6 months the service would expect the

cost of any new uniforms to be met from their fostering weekly allowance.

- 2.7.2 The fostering allowance will cover ongoing clothing costs (including school uniform). When a child joins a new school, changes school, or moves fostering home 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. Some items of uniform can be transferred from one school to another.
- 2.7.3 If the child is in year 11, a payment can be claimed to contribute towards the child's prom outfit.
- 2.7.4 Where payment is required to support a new school uniform/prom outfit, the expenditure will be a maximum of the following:

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| Primary School | Up to £75.00 |
| Secondary School | Up to £100.00 |
| Prom Outfit | Up to £100.00 |

- 2.7.5 Any purchases using this allowance should be noted by the foster carer and receipts kept.

3. Skills Fees

- 3.1 Skills fees are linked to the skills and training that foster carers have completed. Fees are given to carers once approved at panel. Kinship carers who are yet to be approved at panel will only receive the fostering allowance. The skills fee is payable weekly to the carer in relation to each child in their care.

| Age Range | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 |
|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 0 - 4 | £40.00 | £197.00 | £353.00 |
| 5 - 10 | £40.00 | £197.00 | £353.00 |
| 11 - 15 | £40.00 | £197.00 | £353.00 |
| 16 - 17 | £40.00 | £197.00 | £353.00 |

- 3.2 Skills Level 1: Carers who have childcare experience through their own parenting or caring for family and friends' children.

- 3.3 Skills Level 2: Foster carers who evidence skills, knowledge, and experience to care for children with some high-level support needs can be assessed for skills level 2.
- 3.4 Skills Level 3: Those carers who evidence skills, knowledge, and experience, including professional qualifications working with children to meet their complex needs and a high level of support can be assessed at skills level 3.
- 3.5 For approved foster carers there is a progression pathway linked to carer training. Progression to skills levels should be discussed and a plan agreed in carers supervision and Household Review. The progression report completed by the foster carer and their supervising social worker should evidence training and learning and include evidence of placement stability and improved outcomes for the children they care for. Skills levels progression will be presented to the Supporting Children and Carers panel for agreement.
- 3.6 The skills levels are linked to knowledge, experience, and training, and should be reviewed annually. Should carers not continue to meet the requirements or competencies of the level on which they are placed, they may move to another level that best meets their circumstances following review/decision by the Fostering Service Leader and approved by the Head of Service for Children We Care For.

4. Specialist and Other Fees

- 4.1 There are several specialisms that are likely to require additional caring intensity and/or additional funding to support the care of children:

4.2 Parent and Child

- 4.2.1 When both the parent and child are in care, the foster carer will provide for them financially via the fostering allowance as with any other child in their care. It may be appropriate for the foster carer to pass part of the fostering allowance to the looked after parent for them develop budgeting and independence skills. This would be agreed in the Placement Planning Meeting at the beginning of the placement or subsequently at Review meetings.
- 4.2.2 The foster carer must have suitable equipment for the baby, including, cot, sterilising equipment, baby rocking chair, changing mat, pram, appropriate toys, and car seat. These items may be loaned from the Fostering Service. There is an expectation the foster carer supports the parent(s) to cook and prepare meals. Details of daily arrangements will be covered in the Placement Planning Meeting.
- 4.2.3 Assessment Placement
- 4.2.3.1 This is for foster carers who have been trained to assess and supervise parents who have a new baby. Foster carers will be asked to support a mother/father or both parents and their baby. The placement is usually expected to last 12 weeks (but may go on longer depending on circumstances).

4.2.3.2 During the assessment period, the foster carer will be paid the following:

| Assessment fee (12 weeks) | Weekly fee |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| One parent fee | £600.00 |
| Additional parent fee | £300.00 |

4.2.3.3 In addition, during the assessment period the foster carer will be paid the relevant fostering allowance for each child they care for. They will also be paid skills level 1 (whatever their skills level), on the basis that the parent will be providing the majority of the day-to-day care for the child.

4.2.3.4 Where the parent(s) are not being cared for, the maintenance element of the lodgings allowance (£200.00) will be paid per parent. The parent(s) are expected to provide for themselves including food, clothing and other expenses.

4.2.4 Non-Assessment Placement

4.2.4.1 There will be times when the parent and child placement does not include an assessment element and at such times, the assessment fee will not be paid:

1. The placement does not require assessment or intensive supervision by the foster carer.
2. The assessment period ends.

4.2.4.2 For non-assessment placements, the foster carer will be paid the relevant fostering allowance for each child being cared for and their usual skills level fee.

4.2.4.3 Where the parent(s) are not being cared for, the maintenance element of the lodgings allowance (£200.00) will be paid per parent. The parent(s) are expected to provide for themselves including food, clothing and other expenses.

4.3 **Mockingbird Model of Care**

4.3.1 Mockingbird uses an extended family model in the form of 'constellations' which consist of a 'hub' home and several 'satellite' homes nearby. The specially recruited and trained hub home foster carers are level 3 foster carers and receive a Mockingbird fee in recognition of the additional tasks they provide for their constellation which includes sleep overs for children they care for, peer support, regular shared learning, and social activities for which they will receive £50 per week activities allowance. The hub home foster carer must keep a record of spend for audit purposes, to be evidenced on request by the Mockingbird Team Leader.

4.3.2 Where home hub carers share the role, the home hub carers fees will be split between them, proportional to the level of service they are providing within the home hub carer agreement.

| | |
|----------------------------|---------|
| Mockingbird hub home carer | £600.00 |
| Activity fee | £50.00 |

4.3.3 Hub home carers will receive the usual fostering allowance and skills level fee for children they care for as part of their usual foster carer role. Where they provide sleepovers to a child within

the constellation, they will receive a proportion of the fostering allowance and skill level 1 fee (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.

4.4 Out of Hours Carers

- 4.4.1 Portsmouth City Council alongside Hampshire County Council have foster carers on call to provide foster carers for children needing care outside of office hours. Foster carers who volunteer to be on call for out of hours receive a daily on call fee (though this will not be paid if they decline a placement). Foster carers need to be willing and able to offer a home to a child who may need care any time day or night and care for them at least until the office reopens. If a child is placed out of hours, the foster carer will also receive a one-off emergency payment, in addition to the respective allowances and fees paid for the child.

| | |
|--|--|
| On-call Fee | £35.00 per night |
| Emergency one off payment outside of working hours i.e., after 6:00pm and before 8:00am Monday to Friday, weekends/bank Holidays (the one-off fee will not be paid again for the same child in a consecutive night) | Aged 10 and under - £100.00 Aged 11 plus - £200.00 |

4.5 Family Link Care

- 4.5.1 Family Link carers provide pre-agreed care for children with disabilities and are paid an inclusive fee for each period of care they provide.

| Period of Care | Payment Rate |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Up to 4 hours | £28.00 |
| 5 – 8 hours | £58.73 |
| 9 – 12 hours | £84.04 |
| 13 – 24 hours (overnight care) | £136.09 |

4.6 Day Time only Foster Care

- 4.6.1 Where a foster carer is asked by the fostering service to care for a child or children during the day with no overnight stay. This could include assisting with day care support for other carers:

| Period of Care | Skill Level 1 | Skill Level 2 | Skill Level 3 |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 0 – 4 hours | £20.00 | £30.00 | £40.00 |
| 4 hours and above | £40.00 | £60.00 | £80.00 |

4.7 Overnight Fostering Respite Care

- 4.7.1 Respite care is agreed when the needs of the child are assessed as being at such a level that the primary foster carers need a break to boost placement stability. Respite should be offered to ensure stability and should be reviewed as part of the child's care plan. The needs of the child are central to any decisions that are made.
- 4.7.2 Where a foster carer cares for a child to provide respite for the child's family, the respite foster carer receives the fostering allowance (less the clothing, savings and pocket money element) and skills fee for each overnight stay on a pro rata basis (overnight is up to 24 hours 8pm – 8pm. The main foster carer continues to be paid their weekly skills fee and allowance.
- 4.7.3 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.

4.8 Family/Friends Relief Carers

- 4.8.1 As part of the fostering assessment, foster carers identify family and friends as their support network to provide continuity of care and minimal disruption to a child and creating a more 'normalised' care arrangement for the child. Foster carers are encouraged to identify family or friends to provide care for the children when foster carers need to spend some time away from the child they care for.
- 4.8.2 These arrangements are informal and delegated authority can be used for a maximum time of one week. The family/friend identified is required to have a risk assessment that includes a DBS check, local authority check, home safety check and family/friend summary information completed by the foster carers supervising social worker and agreed by the Fostering Service Leader.
- 4.8.3 The relief carer is not subject to the statutory requirements of a foster carer but will be supported by the Fostering Service for the period they are caring for the child. The foster carer remains the child's primary carer and is expected to give the family/friend the child's fostering allowance (minus the child's savings, pocket money and clothing element) to cover the period they care for the child. The child's foster carer does not receive a payment during the period of time that they are on leave, as this is paid within their weekly allowance, spread across the year (See 7.2).

5. Supporting Young People over 18

5.1 Supported Lodgings

- 5.1.1 Supported lodgings carers in Portsmouth is for young people aged 18 - 21 (up to 25 years if in full time education).
- 5.1.2 Supported lodgings carers provide a young person with a room of their own in a private home, where they are a member of the household. The carer provides a safe and supportive environment, working alongside professional services to help and support the young person in gaining skills for independent adult life. This is not a fostering role or assessed under the Fostering Regulations, and therefore they do not receive a fostering allowance or skills fee.
- 5.1.3 Supported lodgings hosts receive the following weekly fees, typically made up from Universal Credit, Housing Allowance, rent contribution from the young person, and a top up from Social Care:
- **Lodgings allowance of £200** to cover household expenses, breakfast and lunch
 - **Support allowance of £60** (minimum 10 hours per week)
 - An *optional evening meal allowance of £20 per week (minimum)*, paid directly from the young person if this option is agreed by all
- 5.1.4 The young person is expected to pay the carer the housing allowance via Universal Credit to cover the rental contribution. Where the young person is in employment, they are expected to pay housing allowance equivalent. Where the young person is in employment and still receiving financial support from Universal Credit, they will be expected to pay the housing allowance equivalent. If the young person is not receiving any financial support from Universal Credit, the rental contribution will be reduced by approximately a third.
- 5.1.5 For those young people moving on from a Supported Lodgings arrangement, a short term limited Away from Home Exceptional Payment may be made to stabilise or maintain the new living arrangement for the young person. This additional payment would be time limited and must be agreed at the Supporting Children and Carers Panel.
- 5.1.6 Children aged 16 and 17 cannot be placed in unregulated rented accommodation or lodgings without the authorisation of the Deputy Director. In these circumstances, the young person's contributions will be different.

5.2 Staying Put

- 5.2.1 Staying put is to enable young people aged 18 - 21 (up to 25 years if in full time education) to remain with their former foster carer. Many children who are being cared for are not ready to live independently when they reach 18 years old and need the continuing support of their foster family. As part of planning for post 18, discussions regarding staying put with foster carers should be discussed at Children we care for Reviews when the child reaches 16 years old. Prior to this the supervising social worker should begin conversations with carers in their supervisions.
- 5.2.2 Staying put carers receive the following weekly fees (the same as Supported Lodgings), typically made up from Universal Credit, Housing Allowance, rent contribution from the young person, and

a top up from Social Care:

- **Lodgings allowance of £200** to cover household expenses, breakfast and lunch
- **Support allowance of £60**
- *An optional evening meal allowance of £20 (minimum)*, paid directly from the young person if this option is agreed by all

5.2.3 Housing allowance via Universal Credit will be claimed by the young person and paid to the carer by the young person. Where the young person is in employment, they are expected to either top up the housing allowance element they receive via Universal Credit or pay a rental contribution.

5.2.4 It is anticipated that when young people move into a Staying Put arrangement, they will require less support from their former foster carers. It is expected that they should be able to be left in the home unsupervised for periods of time, able to make meals for themselves, and travel to where they need to be with little support. However, it is recognised that some young people may need as much support and supervision at 18 that might be expected in relation to a younger child. Therefore, an enhanced support allowance can be paid in such circumstances (instead of the regular support allowance). The enhanced support allowance must be requested at the Supporting Children and Carers Panel and if paid, reviewed six monthly.

5.2.5 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, though carers will not receive any payments during the time that they are away. 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.

5.2.6 Where the young person is receiving a service from Adult Social Care (ASC), any additional payments would need to be agreed with ASC and the Head of the Children We Care For including any sharing of the costs. In some circumstances it may be appropriate for a former foster carer to be assessed and supported as a Shared Lives Carer. This should be considered with the foster carer before discussions as part of the young person's Pathway Plan. This plan should be agreed prior to the child's 18th birthday when planning with ASC led by the Service Leader for transitions.

5.2.7 For those young people moving on from a Staying Put arrangement, a short term limited Away from Home Exceptional Payment may be made to stabilise or maintain the new living arrangement for the young person. This additional payment would be time limited and must be agreed at the Supporting Children and Carers Panel.

5.3 Independence Training Flat

5.3.1 Young people aged 18, who are just about to move into independent accommodation, can be booked into the Portsmouth training flat for a four to six week period. During this time the foster carers will continue to receive their weekly fostering allowance in full plus skills fee as they will still be required to provide 24 hour support during this period.

6. Other Considerations for the Child

6.1 Travel

- 6.1.2 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 living with them which includes school, nursery, health, medical appointments, family time and meetings. This does not include family activities which may include the foster child, and so do not relate specifically to the foster child. Claims should be made monthly.

By Car

- 6.1.3 Mileage is paid to foster carers at 45p per mile. Foster carers are expected to absorb the first 63 miles driven each week, and mileage over this can be claimed for, though no claims for journeys under one mile will be accepted as carers will be expected to walk with children for short distances.
- 6.1.4 If there are two or more children being cared for and the foster carer is transporting to the same school (or nearby school) or contact, then it is expected that the foster carer takes this into consideration when making a claim. Where possible, the foster carer may want to explore whether there are car-sharing opportunities with other local families in the community (including foster carers) for school runs.

Other transport

- 6.1.5 Where felt appropriate, the child/young person may travel to school on public transport. The equivalent travel element of the weekly fostering allowance will be paid by the foster carer, and public transport costs over this can be claimed for.
- 6.1.6 The overriding principle is that children should not be spending significant periods of time in taxis, therefore the payment of taxi fares to school or contact will only be made in exceptional circumstances. There must be no other reasonable option, given the age and circumstances of the child (for example emergency or short-term placement, or temporary illness or disability of the foster carer) and this should be time limited. As transport costs to and from school and contact are an integral part of the fostering allowance, the equivalent travel element of the weekly fostering allowance will be absorbed towards taxi costs.
- 6.1.7 Any taxi costs not covered by the fostering allowance must be approved by the Supporting Children and Carers Panel in advance or as soon as possible in an emergency and no commitment should be entered into with a taxi firm beyond one week without approval of the Supporting Children and Carers Panel. These should be booked and paid for by Portsmouth City Council.

6.2 Special Interests/Hobbies

- 6.2.1 All Portsmouth approved foster carers are entitled to the free Portsmouth City Council Leisure card, available to children they care for and the children of foster carers. Foster carers' can obtain an application form and authorising letter from their supervising social worker. Foster carers should use local Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) Programme for the children they care for when considering alternative holiday clubs and activities.

6.3 Glasses/ Corrective Lenses

- 6.3.1 Expenditure for the full cost of frames for National Health Service lenses, or repairs to glasses will be reimbursed when required.
- 6.3.2 If any additional costs are incurred (associated with the provision of corrective lenses) identified following an eye examination as part of the child's health care plan, these must be agreed in writing with the Fostering Service Leader in advance of the expenditure being made.

6.4 Ethnic and Cultural Needs

- 6.4.1 There may be specific expenses that arise because of a child or young person's cultural or ethnic background. The fostering allowance should be used to cover needs relating to hair care, skin care and other specific issues. For some children with specific needs relating their personal care for cultural and/or religious needs identified within their care plan. Payments for costs to meet those needs must be specified within the Placement Planning Meeting and the child's care plan and the difference between what is seen as standard and the actual cost, can be authorised by the Fostering Service Leader.

6.5 Education Costs

- 6.5.1 Children we care for are supported and encouraged with their education and wider holistic development through Pupil Premium. In the first instance requests for financial support with one-to-one tuition, education trips, extra-curricular opportunities including music/drama/sports activities should be discussed at the child's Personal Education Plan Meetings, Looked After Children Review Meetings and requests made to the child's Virtual School education advocate. Please refer to the pupil premium guidance which is shared annually with all foster carers which details the robust and transparent processes and note that requests must be agreed before any activities can begin, and funding cannot be paid directly to foster carers, and will be passed directly to the provider. If funding is not agreed or the request is not suitable to take to panel, then a request can be considered at the Supporting Children and Carers Panel for an exceptional payment to be made.

6.6 Medical Issues

- 6.6.1 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 plan or advised at the children we care for medical. Any private health care arrangements for a specific purpose must be agreed by the Fostering Service Leader.

6.7 Passports

- 6.7.1 Children we care for will have a passport as identified in their care plan. The application for the passport will be made by the child's social worker and/or parent on the legal status of the child and will complete the passport application form. The foster carer will be reimbursed for any costs associated with the passport application through expenses claim.

6.8 Bicycles

- 6.8.1 When it is agreed that it is in the child's interest to own a bicycle, first consideration should be

given to funding the bicycle from either the birthday, festivity allowance or consideration in relation to the child's savings.

- 6.8.2 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.

6.9 16/17 Year Old Young People

- 6.9.1 Where the young person is in education and training and not in receipt of an income, it is expected that the foster carer gives the young person the clothing and pocket money (and where relevant travel) element of the fostering allowance.

6.9.2 Unemployed or in Full-Time Education

- 6.9.2.1 The young person 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 the department even if the young person has a bursary. 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 the department will pay for public transport to and from education.

6.9.3 In Employment or Training/Apprenticeship

- 6.9.3.1 Young people need to make a financial contribution towards their rent and care costs if they are earning over the equivalent Universal Credit amount per week net pay (Net pay is the gross pay after compulsory deductions Income tax, National Insurance etc) from the wages or benefits they may receive. Young People will not be expected to make a weekly contribution if they are earning less than the equivalent of Universal Credit per week. The young person will still be entitled to the clothing and pocket money element of the fostering allowance, if they are earning less than the equivalent of Universal Credit a week. However, if they are earning more, this element might be affected and possibly cease dependent on the amount they are earning. This will be agreed between the young person, foster carer and social worker.

- 6.9.3.2 Expenditure on necessary clothing, equipment and tools may be provided and paid for by the department. Requests for funding must be presented to the Supporting Children and Carers Panel.

6.9.4 How the Financial Contribution is Calculated

- 6.9.4.1 Young people will be expected to pay a contribution amounting to a third of anything they earn above the equivalent of Universal Credit per week.

- 6.9.4.2 If the young person and their carer agree, the young person purchases their own food the rental contribution amount will be reduced to a mutually agreed amount to take into consideration the cost of food.

- 6.9.4.4 The weekly amount of supplement required from 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 fostering allowance plus any skill fee payable minus the clothing and pocket money element.
- 6.9.4.5 Young people will need to contribute if they are earning as part of moving towards independence. Foster Carers will receive the same amount per week made up of payments from the fostering allowance and young person. The foster carer will continue to receive birthday/festival allowance for the young person. The foster carer and the young person must clarify arrangements in writing, sharing this with the child's social worker.

7. Other Considerations for the Foster Carer

7.1 Refer a Friend

- 7.1.1 We want to increase our fostering community so that we can provide excellent quality local care for more children. If a current Portsmouth foster carer refers someone and they are successfully assessed and approved, the referring foster carer and newly approved foster carer will receive £500 each as a thank you once the first child has been placed. There is no limit to the number of prospective foster carers that can be introduced.

7.2 Foster Carers' Leave

- 7.2.1 The holiday year runs from 1st April to the 31st of March (the financial year).
- 7.2.2 A foster carer who has had a child/ren placed with them during the financial year will be entitled to paid leave of up to 14 nights leave per year, per child. The amount of leave due will be pro-rata based on the length of time the child/ren has been placed with the carer.
- 7.2.3 All foster carers can request a break from fostering. Some foster carers may choose to take a break (foster carer's leave) during a period they have no children in their care. Where possible this is the preferred approach, minimising disruption for the child. Foster carers are always encouraged to identify support carers within their family network for such occasions where foster carers should require a short break or holiday. It is essential that the number of changes in accommodation for the child/young person is kept to a minimum therefore careful consideration of foster carer's holiday is important.
- 7.2.4 Any leave must be requested well in advance and dates must be agreed by the Team Leader or Service Leader within the fostering service before the foster carer makes any holiday arrangements. Leave cannot be guaranteed as the service must be assured that there is an alternative carer who can meet the child's needs before they are able to agree the foster carer's holiday.
- 7.2.5 Any foster carer choosing to take additional foster care leave for any reason would be able to do so, but this would be unpaid. Respite carers including family link carers, supported lodgings, and staying put carers do not get leave allowances.

7.3 Child/Young Person Temporarily not in a Foster Placement

- 7.3.1 Where a child is not in a fostering placement, for example to return home, extended family time, adoption introductions, or if the child is in a specialist care home for a specific period, with the approval of the Service Leader for Fostering, the foster carer may be paid the fostering allowance and any fee normally payable for a maximum of 3 nights, for keeping the carer home free in case of emergencies. The Head of Service for Children We Care For will need to agree

payments to continue for up to a further 11 nights in exceptional circumstances.

7.4 Home Furnishing and Equipment for Fostering

7.4.1 It is expected that foster families will have the basic furniture and equipment needed to fulfil the fostering role. This includes a bed, bedding, wardrobe, chest of drawers for a child's bedroom. School age children will also need a place to comfortably do their homework. Foster carers are expected to meet the costs of those items, including replacement in terms of natural wear and tear.

7.4.2 Babies and pre-school children will need cots, baby monitors, highchairs, prams, buggies car seats and other related equipment. Such items may be purchased by the Fostering Service and loaned to foster carers for the period the child is in their care. An equipment loan will be set up by the supervising social worker. When the equipment is no longer needed it will be returned to the Fostering Service in good condition and suitable for further loan.

7.5 Childcare and Travel Expenses for Attending Fostering Training

7.5.1 It is the foster carer's responsibility to make appropriate childcare arrangements to attend training or attend meetings. Relevant checks on those who provide regular childcare will be made by the fostering service if required, and the babysitting rates apply only on production of a receipt as proof of the payment made:

| Babysitting | Amount (total) |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| Under 4 hours maximum | £15.00 |
| Over 4 hours less than 12 hours | £30.00 |

7.5.2 Carers attending fostering training, events or meetings can claim for travel and should consider the most cost-effective way of travelling, including sharing journeys with other foster carers. Claims should be submitted on a monthly basis on the 'Claim for Foster Carer Training Courses' (AF24) form.

7.6 Complaints and Allegations

7.6.1 Where carers are subject to an allegation and a child/ren living with them are moved as a result, the carer will continue to receive the fostering allowance and any fees normally paid for the child/ren for a period of up to 28 days. If the decision is made not to return the child within that timeframe, payments will cease immediately. This is intended to ensure that carers do not suffer undue financial hardship because of an allegation having been made against them and supports the possibility of the child/ren returning to their care. Should an investigation still be ongoing after the 28-night period, the Head of Service Children We Care For must agree any continuing payments to the foster carers.

8. Benefits, Tax and Insurance

8.1 Child Benefit

8.1.1 Foster carers are not eligible to claim or receive Child Benefit for a child they care for, and that 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.

- 8.1.2 The fostering allowance covers all food costs incurred by the child whilst living with them including school meals or packed lunches and meal costs during family time. All children in Reception, Year 1 and 2 are automatically entitled to receive school meals.
- 8.1.3 When a child with a disability is placed, foster carers must inform their supervising social worker to enable Children's Services 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.

8.2 Disability Living Allowance

- 8.2.1 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 being cared for, the child's social worker should be involved in discussions with the parent relating to the transfer of the DLA to the foster carer and arrangements agreed at the Placement Planning Meeting. 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.
- 8.2.2 The DLA is to be used to enhance the child's life and the child's social worker must be involved in decisions on how the DLA can be used to improve the child's life and the supervising social worker is responsible for monitoring the money is spent in foster carer supervision.
- 8.2.3 Examples of how the money could be spent:
- Activities that are costly i.e., 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
 - 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
 - Contribution to replacement/repair to furnishings/property outside of daily wear and tear

- Special toys to meet child's needs – which may be of therapeutic value
- Domestic help to allow the carer to spend more time with child

8.2.4 Please note that all escorts or paid help must have a current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check to ensure their suitability.

8.3. Housing Allowance/Universal Credit

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

8.4 Council Tax and Council Tax Benefit

8.4.1 The foster carer is always responsible for paying their Council Tax or claiming Council Tax Benefit.

8.5 His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC)

8.5.1 All foster carers in receipt of fostering allowances are self-employed and must register with His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) as such. It is the carers' responsibility to hold their remittance slips for minimum period of six years plus current. If copies are lost, or carers require a hard copy of electronic remittance slips they can request a new one, however there will be a charge of £5.00 to cover the associated costs. No annual statements will be provided after 2023/24.

8.5.2 Further information can be accessed from the Fostering Network website:

<https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/advice-information/finances/tax-and-national-insurance>

8.5.3 A useful online 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.

8.6 Insurance

8.6.1 Foster carers are expected to have suitable fully comprehensive insurances for their property, including contents insurance for their own personal possessions and for the property of the child they care for. It is recommended that the foster carer informs their insurance company that they are fostering. The insurance policy excess is the choice of the foster carer and is at their own risk.

8.6.2 Portsmouth City Council Insurance does not cover any claim related to cars and does not pay foster carers insurance excess. Any request for reimbursement for damage or loss to property outside of the foster carers should be discussed with the Fostering Service Lead in the first instance.

9. Payments and Expenses Issues

9.1 Payments

- 9.1.2 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.
- 9.1.6 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.

9.2 Overpayments

- 9.2.1 Overpayments will be recovered as soon as possible from future payments where they are ongoing or where this is not possible an invoice will be raised.

9.3 Expenses

- 9.3.1 Claims for expenses must be made monthly. Any claims over three months old will not be made under any circumstances.
- 9.3.2 Foster Carers are expected to complete a log of all income and expenditure related to holiday, birthday and festival allowances together with clothing and personal expenditure. This information should be recorded on the *Record of Expenditure Form*.
- 9.3.3 This will help the carer to:
- Demonstrate what the money has been used for and thereby reduce any risk of complaint.
 - Evidence expenditure to the Supervising Social Worker and the child's Social Worker who will monitor and "sign off" forms in supervision and statutory visits.
- 9.3.4 If age appropriate, a young person should be encouraged to sign the expenditure sheet with the carer. This ensures that the young person is aware of financial management and the important of financial and budgetary planning.
- 9.3.5 The completion of the form is required for audit purposes and to ensure that children and young people have received their full entitlement for each financial year and particularly when they move between placements.
- 9.3.6 A record of respite arrangements should be recorded by the carers to ensure that entitlements are received, and correct payments made.

9.4 Receipts

- 9.4.1 Foster Carers should retain receipts for their records as they may otherwise find themselves challenged by the Fostering Team or HMRC.

APPENDIX A - TABLE OF ALLOWANCES AND FEES

Allowances

Fostering Allowance - weekly rates

| 2024/25 | Age 0 to 4 | Age 5 to 10 | Age 11 to 15 | Age 16 to 17 |
|--------------|------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| Total | £189.00 | £208.00 | £238.00 | £278.00 |
| Savings | £6.26 | 6.26 | £9.87 | £9.87 |
| Pocket money | £3.97 | £10.11 | £16.28 | £21.81 |
| Clothing | £30.79 | £37.59 | £56.40 | £59.45 |
| Travel | £28.35 | £28.35 | £28.35 | £28.35 |

Guidance is given in the table above for the proportion of clothing, long term savings, pocket money, and travel.

Emergency Clothing

| Age band | Emergency clothing (up to) |
|-------------|----------------------------|
| 0–10 Years | £100.00 |
| 11-17 Years | £200.00 |

Birthday & Religious Festival

| Age band | Birthday & Festival |
|-------------|---------------------|
| 0–4 Years | £189.00 |
| 5-10 Years | £208.00 |
| 11-15 Years | £238.00 |
| 16-18 Years | £278.00 |

Activities

| Age band | Activity Allowance |
|----------|--------------------|
| 0-4 | £378.00 |
| 5-10 | £416.00 |
| 11-15 | £476.00 |
| 16-17 | £556.00 |

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

Holiday

Holiday Allowance is up to £500.00 per child per financial year.

School Related Clothing

| | |
|------------------|---------------|
| Primary School | Up to £75.00 |
| Secondary School | Up to £100.00 |
| Prom Expenses | Up to £100.00 |

Skills Fees

| Age Range | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 |
|-----------|---------|---------|---------|
| 0 - 4 | £40.00 | £197.00 | £353.00 |
| 5 - 10 | £40.00 | £197.00 | £353.00 |
| 11 - 15 | £40.00 | £197.00 | £353.00 |
| 16 - 17 | £40.00 | £197.00 | £353.00 |

Specialist and Other Fees

Parent and Child

Assessment Placement

During the assessment period, the foster carer will be paid the following:

| Assessment fee (12 weeks) | Weekly fee |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| One parent fee | £600.00 |
| Additional parent fee | £300.00 |

In addition, during the assessment period the foster carer will be paid the relevant fostering allowance for each child they care for. They will also be paid skills level 1 (whatever their skills level), on the basis that the parent will be providing the majority of the day-to-day care for the child.

Where the parent(s) are not being cared for, the maintenance element of the **lodgings allowance (£200.00)** will be paid per parent. The parent(s) are expected to provide for themselves including food, clothing, and other expenses.

Non-Assessment Placement

For non-assessment placements, the foster carer will be paid the relevant fostering allowance for each child being cared for and their usual skills level fee.

Where the parent(s) are not being cared for, the maintenance element of the **lodgings allowance (£200.00)** will be paid per parent. The parent(s) are expected to provide for themselves including food, clothing, and other expenses.

Mockingbird

| | |
|----------------------------|---------|
| Mockingbird hub home carer | £600.00 |
| Activity fee | £50.00 |

Hub home carers will receive the usual fostering allowance and skills level fee for children they care for as part of their usual foster carer role.

Out of Hours Carers

| | |
|---|--|
| On-call Fee | £35.00 per night |
| Emergency one off payment outside of working hours i.e., after 6:00pm and before 8:00am Monday to Friday, weekends/bank holidays | Aged 10 and under - £100.00 Aged 11 plus - £200.00 |

Family Link Care

| Period of Care | Payment Rate |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Up to 4 hours | £28.00 |
| 5 – 8 hours | £58.78 |
| 9 – 12 hours | £84.04 |
| 13 – 24 hours (overnight care) | £136.09 |

Day Time only Foster Care

| Period of Care | Skill Level 1 | Skill Level 2 | Skill Level 3 |
|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 0 – 4 hours | £20.00 | £30.00 | £40.00 |
| 4 hours and above | £40.00 | £60.00 | £80.00 |

Supporting Young People over 18

Supported Lodgings

Supported lodgings hosts receive the following weekly fees:

- **Lodgings allowance of £200** to cover household expenses and breakfast and lunch
- **Support allowance of £60** (minimum 10 hours per week)
- *An optional evening meal allowance of £20 (minimum)*, paid directly from the young person if this option is agreed by all

Staying Put

Staying put carers receive the following weekly fees:

- **Lodgings allowance of £200** to cover household expenses and breakfast and lunch
- **Support allowance of £60** (minimum 10 hours per week)

- An *optional evening meal allowance of £20 (minimum)*, paid directly from the young person if this option is agreed by all

Other Rates and Allowances

| Rate/Allowance | Amount |
|---|---|
| Mileage rate | £0.45 per mile |
| Refer a friend | £500.00 (for referring foster carer and new foster carer) if approved |
| Babysitting - under 4 hours maximum | £15.00 |
| Over 4 hours but less than 12 hours | £30.00 |
| 13 – 24 hours (overnight care) | £160.00 |
| Fee for printing and postage of replacement remittance (per copy) | £5.00 |