



Allowances, fee payments and expenses:

- Fostering
- Supported Lodgings
- Staying Put
- Special Guardianship

For Information & Guidance
April 2023 - March 2024

Oxfordshire County Council

Allowances

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This document is reviewed at least annually, normally for 1 April. Specific sections may be reviewed and updated at different intervals and we recommend that you visit the Oxfordshire Fostering Website at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ to ensure you are accessing the latest document.

V1 April 2023 (1/9/2023)

Allowances Paid to Oxfordshire Carers

This guidance sets out the allowances payable to Oxfordshire County Council carers. Information is also included about Staying Put, Supported Lodgings and Special Guardianship allowances.

Fostering Allowances

Fostering Allowances are centred around a maintenance allowance, which is based on the governments recommended rates for South-East England.

In most cases the allowance will enable carers to meet all normal needs of foster children at the standard of an average family. However, in certain circumstances, other exceptional costs may be met, see page 19

What is the Fostering Allowance for?

The maintenance allowance is expected to cover food and maintenance, adequate clothing, pocket money, activities, playgroup fees, school daytrips, after school clubs and for holidays that the child takes with the foster family. See pages 2-3, for full details.

Allowances and skill payments are only payable when a child is in placement, unless otherwise stated.

Skills Payments

All foster carers can be considered for a skill level fee if they meet the competency and training requirements on application or as part of a household review. These will be considered for approval by the team manager and ratified by the Agency Decision Maker. The manager must review the request within 10 working days. The skills payment will be backdated to the 11th working day after the Household Review meeting date.

If carers do not continue to meet the competencies and/or training requirements they may move to another level and this will be recorded as part of a household review, agreed by the team manager and Agency Decision Maker or may be presented to the Fostering Panel for consideration.

The Fostering Allowance

The fostering allowance covers:

The Fostering Home:

- New/replacement equipment all general household wear and tear
- Extra heating costs
- Extra lighting
- Extra decorating costs
- Home Contents Insurance
- Car insurance (fully comprehensive)
- Extra telephone costs

Food:

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

Toiletries and Personal Needs:

- All basic toiletries
- All basic skin and hair products
- Hairdressing
- Nappies for 0–4-year-olds
- Glasses and contact lenses

Clothes:

- All clothing needs, appropriate to season including school uniform. If the change of foster placement has necessitated moving school, then a contribution towards the cost of school uniform will be considered.
- Consideration will be given to contribution to the cost of school uniform, if there is a change of placement necessitating a change of school.

Standard School Resources:

- School day trips and activities
- Books, pens, pencils, crayons, paint, paper, etc.
- Sports clothing and equipment
- Basic play/toddler group and nursery fees
- School uniform
- Party/Celebration clothes, including prom costs

All Religious Needs, Including:

- Prayer books/equipment
- Special clothing
- Dietary needs
- Travel to place of worship

Telephone:

- Calls to birth family members
- Calls to Children's Services and other professionals
- Mobile contracts/top ups
- Broadband access

Leisure and Out of School Activities:

- Recreational outings (including travel and entrance fees)
- Cinema and theatre tickets
- Clubs, hobbies and leisure activities
- Contribution to birthdays/Christmas/other events e.g. Eid
- Specialist clothing for out of school activities
- Musical equipment
- Play schemes, play group, holiday activity costs
- Toys, games and reading materials
- Family holidays (excluding our annual contribution for summer holiday activity)

Other:

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

Pocket Money and Savings:

- Foster carers should encourage children and young people to make regular savings from an early age. Please review the recommended minimum levels of pocket money and savings on page 24. The initial placement planning meeting is where exact amounts should be agreed.

Holidays:

- Any expenses relating to holidays or holiday activities not covered by additional holiday allowances.
- The cost of education related trips/residential activities will be met at least once during the child's primary school and once during the child's secondary school years by Children's Services.

Transport:

- Transport costs – including bus passes. Please see expectations and remuneration for transport on page 23.

Skill Levels

Skill Level One

This standard level applies to those carers who meet the competencies for this level and will be applied to Family and Friends foster carers and may also apply to carers who are approved for relief care (occasional care).

This may also apply to carers who, through choice do not want to move through the Skill Level structure.

Foster carers will maintain an ongoing training and development portfolio that demonstrates how they are meeting the skills required of them.

| Training Requirements | | |
|--|-------------|--|
| Safeguarding | Mandatory | Must be completed within 12 months and refreshed 3 yearly |
| First Aid | Mandatory | Must be completed within 12 months and refreshed 3 yearly |
| Safe Caring Policy | Mandatory | Family policy must be set up and reviewed at regular intervals and at least annually |
| Training, Support & Development Standards (TSDS) | Requirement | Online training. Family & Friends carers to complete within 18 months, other carers within 12 months |
| Induction Meeting | Requirement | Completed with the Supervising Social Worker with the welcome pack |
| Skills to Foster | Requirement | |

Allowance (Skill Level One)

| Age Band | Allowance £ per week |
|----------|----------------------|
| 0-4 | 183.00 |
| 5-10 | 195.00 |
| 11-15 | 242.00 |
| 16-18 | 296.00 |

Competencies (Skill Level One)

1. Caring for Children

- Ability to provide a good standard of care to children which promotes healthy emotional, physical, sexual and intellectual development and helps build self-esteem.
- An ability to accept the individual child and ensure their wishes and feelings are known.
- Ensure that children are cared for in a clean and welcoming home and where consideration is given to creating a personalised and age-appropriate bedroom.
- An understanding of the importance of Life Story work and ability/willingness to contribute to this.

- To ensure a child has access to community activities.
- An ability to work closely with the child's family and others who are important to the child.
- An ability to set appropriate boundaries and manage children's behaviour within these, without the use of physical or other inappropriate behaviour; to encourage positive behaviour.
- A knowledge of normal child development and an ability to listen to and communicate with children appropriate to their emotional age and understanding.
- An ability to promote a young person's development towards adult status and independence.
- To provide pocket money and make savings for children, encouraging them to put money aside as well.
- A non-judgemental and anti-discriminatory approach to be integral to childcare practice. An ability to work/live with cultural difference.

2. Providing a Safe and Caring Environment

- An ability to ensure that children are cared for in a home where they are safe from harm or abuse.
- An ability to help children keep themselves safe from harm or abuse, and to know how to seek help if their safety is threatened.
- An ability to recognise the particular vulnerability to abuse/exploitation of looked after children.

3. Working as Part of a Team

- An ability to collaborate with other professionals and to contribute to the Department's planning for the child/young person.
- An ability to communicate effectively.
- An ability to keep information confidential.
- To make yourself available for regular supervision meetings with your supervising social worker.
- An ability to promote equality, diversity and rights of individuals and groups within society.
- An ability to record key information about the child and ensure this is shared with social workers regularly.

4. Own Development

- An ability to appreciate how personal experiences have affected themselves and their families and the impact that fostering is likely to have on them all.
- An ability to use people and links within the community to provide support.
- An ability to use training opportunities and improve skills.
- An ability to sustain positive relationships and maintain effective functioning through periods of stress.

Skill Level Two

This level applies to carers with full approval and those who meet the necessary requirement and competencies for Level 2. They will receive a skills fee.

Carers wishing to move to this level of payment from Level 1 will have demonstrated that they meet the competencies for Level 2. They will have completed all the mandatory and required training for Level 1. They must have completed the Skills to Foster and have completed or be registered for record keeping and delegated authority. This will be evidenced and approved as part of a household review.

Some new applicants may meet the requirement to enter the structure at Level 2 and this will be covered in the assessment. Applicants will need to demonstrate the same quality of care, equivalent training and sufficient experience to complete Training and Development Standards (TSDS) during assessment.

| Training Requirements | | |
|---|---|---|
| Safeguarding | Mandatory | Registration required. Must be completed within 12 months and refreshed 3 yearly |
| First Aid | Mandatory | Registration required. Must be completed within 12 months and refreshed 3 yearly |
| Safe Caring Policy | Mandatory | Family policy must be set up and reviewed at regular intervals and at least annually |
| Training, Support & Development Standards (TSDS) | Requirement | Modules 1 and 2 must be completed and full course completed within 12 months |
| Induction Training | Requirement | Completed with the Supervising Social Worker with the welcome pack |
| Skills to Foster | Requirement | Must be completed. |
| Recording and delegated authority | Requirement | Registration required must be completed within 12 months |
| Moving a child to permanency | Requirement | Must be completed by carers moving babies/young children to adoptive/long term placements |
| Other training | Further training to be discussed and agreed with Supervising Social Worker at regular intervals | |

Foster carers will have been assessed as having demonstrated they can provide the quality of care for this level and will be able to meet the needs of children placed with them.

It is expected that Level 2 foster carers will be required to evidence that they continue to meet the competencies and requirements, and these will be discussed during the Annual Household Review. On-going personal development is an essential requirement to remain at Level 2.

Allowance & Skills Payments (Skill Level Two)

| Age Band | Allowance £ per week | Skills Payment £ per week | Total Payment £ per week |
|----------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 0-4 | 183.00 | 169.00 | 352.00 |
| 5-10 | 195.00 | 169.00 | 364.00 |
| 11-15 | 242.00 | 169.00 | 411.00 |
| 16-18 | 296.00 | 169.00 | 465.00 |

Competencies (Skill Level Two)

Evidence of growth and development of competencies demonstrated in Level One.

1. Caring for Children

- Foster Carers to provide a range of evidence to demonstrate that they have improved outcomes for children/ young people where they have complex needs.
- An ability to encourage children to develop appropriate social behaviour, helping them to become more independent and improve emotional regulation and literacy.
- An ability to help children develop basic aspects of memory, thinking, imagination and manipulative skills through play, reading, conversation and other activities.
- A developed understanding of the vulnerability of looked after children to forms of exploitation. Helping a child/young person to keep themselves safe.
- An ability to help children develop their language skills and general self-expression. To help them to attain their educational potential and support them for periods when they may not be in school.
- An ability to plan for and provide an appropriate routine which meets the child's needs and improves outcomes to help the child meet developmental milestones.
- Able to work closely with birth families and others who are important to the child. Supporting family time plans and to support the child if this is part of the care plan.
- An ability to help children and families cope with loss and bereavement resulting from life threatening illness or separation through adoption or loss of their family.
- Evidence an ability to observe and assess children, clearly recording progress and any other aspects of significance and pass on this information as required.
- Able to work in the best interests of the child in helping their transition to permanence (return home, long term care, adoption).

2. Providing a Safe and Caring Environment

- An ability to observe and respond appropriately to the possibility of child abuse and neglect.
- An ability to observe and assess children clearly recording development and anything else significant to the child.
- An ability to appropriately challenge practices to ensure that it is anti-discriminatory in its approach and respects all children and their families.
- An ability to provide regular good quality, detailed recordings, identifying areas where the child has made progress and developed new skills as well as detailing significant events for the child to contribute to the life story book.

3. Working as Part of a Team

- An ability to work closely with other professionals, sharing information, exchanging skills and working under the guidance or in collaboration with others involved with the child.
- To feel confident in attending and contributing to a range of meetings and work closely with others to improve the outcomes for the child.

4. Own Development

- To maintain a personal development plan, attend training and to apply the learning to improve your own practice.
- To refresh the mandatory training every 3 years and demonstrate you have attended post approval training and demonstrated they have completed some self-directed learning as discussed with their supervising social worker.
- To prepare for supervision with your supervising social worker and follow through on agreed actions.

Skill Level Three

This level applies to foster carers who have the necessary experience to care for children with additional needs or more complex behaviour, this will mainly be children in the 11+ age band. This would include foster carers who have a professional qualification relating to working with children/ young people or transferable skills from another setting.

Foster carers will have substantial childcare experience and a firm commitment to their own learning and development.

Foster carers cannot move to Level 3 in respect of a child already in placement. The foster carer needs to evidence the competencies for Level 3 (including Level 1 and Level 2) and agree to a placement where the needs of the child require a Skill Level 3 carer. An assessment will be undertaken as part of the Household Review and agreed by the Team Manager.

| Training Requirements | | |
|--|---|---|
| The training identified at Level Two must have been completed and the Mandatory training should be up-to-date | | |
| Fostering Toolkit | Requirement | Course must have been completed (excludes carers of children 0-2) |
| Attachment & Trauma | Requirement | An introduction to Attachment, developmental Trauma and Therapeutic Parenting |
| Child Exploitation training | Requirement | Child Exploitation Parts 1 (eLearning) & Webinar available via OSCB website. Child Criminal exploitation will be added shortly. Course must have been completed (excludes carers of children 0-2) |
| Other training | Further training to be discussed and agreed with Supervising Social Worker at regular intervals | |

Skill Level 3 carers are expected to be available to care for a child at any time i.e. any employment they may have would not prevent them from caring for a child when required to do so.

It is expected that Level 3 foster carers will continually evidence these requirements and competencies. These will be discussed at regular intervals and confirmed as part of the Household Review. On-going personal development is an essential requirement.

Allowance & Skills Payments (Skill Level Three)

| Age Band | Allowance £ per week | Skills Payment £ per week | Total Payment £ per week |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|--|---|
| 0-4 | 183.00 | 224.00 | 407.00 |
| 5-10 | 195.00 | 224.00 | 419.00 |
| 11-15 | 242.00 | 246.00 | 488.00 |
| 16-18 | 296.00 | 246.00 | 542.00 |

Careful consideration will need to be given for a foster carer to take a third placement and this will need to be agreed by the Fostering Team Manager and the social workers of the other children placed.

Competencies (Skill Level Three)

1. Caring for Children

- Foster carer provides a high standard of care to children looked after with the most complex needs and challenging behaviours that promotes development and includes emotional warmth, nurturing and understanding in very challenging circumstances.
- A good understanding and the ability to reflect on the impact that chronic abuse and trauma has on all areas of a child’s development.
- An ability and willingness to take part in therapeutic work with children with appropriate supervision and consultation.
- To support children/young people who have failed to succeed in mainstream school, to work towards achieving stability in mainstream school or another educational pathway.
- To be flexible in providing day care for children waiting for an identified educational placement.
- To help a child self-regulate and manage stress.
- To help a child communicate their thoughts and feelings effectively and safely.

2. Providing a Safe and Caring Environment

- Assess the risks a child might pose to self, others and/or environment and the risk others might pose to the child and act to reduce this. To contribute towards the risk management plan and work to reduce risk.
- A level of understanding and experience of managing risk.
- Ability to distinguish between behaviours which may be a result of past trauma and those that are expected as part of normal childhood development.

- Knowledge and understanding of anti-social behaviours such as self-harm, drug use, mental health issues, criminal activity. The impact of those behaviours on the child and others.

3. Working as Part of a Team

- Work closely with Placements, Care and Support Brokerage Team and children's social workers to actively participate in placement decisions and giving robust reasons for refusal of placements.
- To ensure that information is kept confidential and to understand when it is appropriate to share this.
- To promote equality and diversity and to challenge discrimination by communicating in a non-judgemental manner.

4. Professionalism and Personal Development

- To complete detailed, reflective and timely recordings as well as reports any significant concerns about a child their own ability to care for a child to their supervising social worker.
- Capacity to engage in and develop professionally through reflective supervision.
- An openness to discuss what impact fostering is likely to have/has had on themselves/their families and relationships.
- Can demonstrate a commitment to ongoing training and application in practice and able to evidence previous relevant training undertaken. An ability and willingness to further own knowledge by self-guided learning e.g. reading, media search.

Skill Level Four – Specialist Programmes

A. Oxfordshire Therapeutic Foster Care (OTFC)

Foster carers will usually be full time Oxfordshire Therapeutic Foster Carers with one carer at home full time. OTFC carers provide placements to challenging and vulnerable children aged between 3 and 11 years old. It is expected that holidays will be taken between placements unless they include the fostered child. Ideally OTFC placements will be solo, however foster carers with other children in the household will be considered if the children are settled, secure and assessed as likely to cope with a child with complex needs.

OTFC carers are expected:

- to attend a 2-day OTFC training
- to attend weekly group supervision and monthly training delivered by the OTFC Programme Supervisor
- to have had some training in Attachment Theory, and developmental Trauma.
- to have attended the Fostering Toolkit Programme, or to plan to do so with in the first 12 months if newly approved OCC carers.
- to undertake 4 x additional training courses to support their fostering of children with complex needs alongside mandatory training and as agreed in their supervision plan.
- to engage fully with support from the OTFC team including daily PDR calls

Allowance & Skills Payments - OTFC (Skill Level Four)

A retainer consisting of the skills element of the fee will be paid for a maximum of 13 weeks in any one financial year period and foster carers receiving this fee will be expected to help with mainstream relief care and day-care. Foster carers will only receive the maintenance allowance when a child is placed with them. This agreement will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Oxfordshire Therapeutic foster carers providing relief placements only will be paid on a pro rata basis at the below rate.

Where the Therapeutic Foster Care Programme is provided to child in a mainstream foster placement ('Wrap around') the foster carer may be eligible to receive the OTFC skills payment at the discretion of the team manager and provided they engage fully with the programme. The fee will be paid for the duration the child is on the programme.

OTFC carers are expected not to take holidays without the child whilst they are in placement and therefore are entitled to a 2-week holiday allowance consisting of the skills payment.

| Age Band | Maintenance Allowance £ per week | Therapeutic Foster Care Fee £ per week | Total Payment £ per week |
|----------|-------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 3-4 | 183.00 | 405.00 | 588.00 |
| 5-10 | 195.00 | 405.00 | 600.00 |
| 11 | 242.00 | 405.00 | 647.00 |

OTFC Enhanced Programme for Adolescents

The OTFC enhanced programme offers specialist placements to adolescents aged 12+. The placements are likely to continue until the young person is able to move into the leaving care pathway. Carers will be expected to be experienced in caring for adolescents and to be willing to go the extra mile to ensure they are ready for independent living. Ideally OTFC Enhanced placements will be solo, however foster carers with other children in the household will be considered if the children are settled, secure and assessed as likely to cope with a child with complex needs.

As above, OTFC carers on the enhanced programme are expected;

- to attend a 2-day OTFC training and on-going monthly training delivered by the OTFC Programme Supervisor
- to have had some training in Attachment Theory, and developmental Trauma.
- to have attended the Fostering Toolkit Programme, or to plan to do so with in the first 12 months if newly approved OCC carers.
- to undertake 4 x additional training courses to support their fostering of children with complex needs alongside mandatory training and as agreed in their supervision plan.
- to engage fully with support from the OTFC team including daily PDR calls

Allowance & Skills Payments - OTFC Enhanced (Skill Level Four)

| Age Band | Maintenance Allowance £ per week | Therapeutic Foster Care Fee £ per week | Total Payment £ per week |
|----------|-------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 11-15 | 242.00 | 777.00 | 1019.00 |
| 16-18 | 296.00 | 777.00 | 1073.00 |

Competencies – OTFC (Skill Level Four)

1. Caring for Children

- Foster carers have significant and relevant previous experience of caring for children and young people with challenging behaviour resulting from previous trauma. They are able to view the child positively and promote signature strengths.
- Foster carers are confident in working with traumatised children with a range of complex needs and are able to establish and maintain positive working relationships with children with complex needs which involve nurture, structure and boundary setting.
- Foster carers are able to work in a strengths-based way using social learning theory and a strengths perspective. This includes using behavioural strategies such as reward and incentive systems, offering structured and predictable routines, modelling and providing regular positive reinforcement, ensuring opportunities to build connections using PACE.
- Foster carers have experience and understanding of the rationale of early intervention techniques to prevent situations escalating.
- Foster carers are confident to adapt their parenting approach to support the individual child's emotional and developmental needs and are committed to the child's individualised daily programme set out and agreed with the Programme Supervisor.
- Foster carers have skills in observation and monitoring of children's behaviour and presentation in line with guidance from the Programme Supervisor. They will monitor the child's behaviour and progress and convey information verbally via a daily phone call (PDR) from a member of the team.
- Foster carers will be available to support children who have been excluded from school or where there is no school provision.

2. Providing Safe and Caring Environment

- Foster carers recognise the need and are able to provide a high level of active supervision to maintain children's safety and well-being in their home and in the community.
- Foster carers are able to manage challenging behaviour from children in line with therapeutic approaches as advised by the team, to understand the context of the behaviour and respond effectively to build connections with the child at times of difficulty.
- Foster carers can reflect in the moment to actively utilise de-escalation techniques to minimise the risk to the child and others in potentially volatile situations.

3. Working as Part of a Team

- Foster carers are an integral part of the Therapeutic foster care team and will engage in regular meetings with the Programme Supervisor and other members of the team. They are confident to share their experiences and insights with others, to contribute to discussions about the child's strengths and needs and take an active role in delivering the programme model.
- Foster carers commit to taking part in the daily Parent Daily Record (PDR) reporting which is a requirement of the programme. The PDR informs the basis for intervention to support the child's development and increase connections.
- Foster carers have report writing skills of the highest level. They must be accurate, reflective and must demonstrate compassionate understanding of where behaviours come from and what needs they are reflecting.
- Foster carers will provide a weekly written recording of the child's presentation and behaviour, reflecting the effectiveness of strategies and any other observations required for presentation at the weekly foster carer group.
- Attendance and participation at the weekly foster carer supervision group is essential.
- Carers are confident to complete psychometric questionnaires as required as part of the assessment of the child's behavioural and adaptive skills.

4. Professionalism and Personal Development

- Foster carers can engage in reflective practice through supervision. This includes the ability to acknowledge personal triggers and recognise the impact of secondary trauma.
- Foster carers are proactive in attending training and making use of resources to enhance knowledge and understanding of the impact of trauma and negative early childhood experiences.
- Foster carers can reflect on interventions and strategies and to adapt ways of working based on the needs of the child.
- Carers are open to constructive feedback and to alternative ways of working.
- Carers have the confidence and ability to actively work alongside other team members to ensure a consistent approach across all contexts is maintained.

B. Parent and Child Programme (Skill Level Four)

Parent and Child foster carers will provide support to parents who need help and guidance to be able to care and support their child(ren) safely. These are short term arrangements (approximately 12 weeks). One carer will need to be at home full-time.

Allowance & Skills Payments – Parent & Child Placements (Skill Level Four)

| Age Band | Allowance £ per week | Skills Payment £ per week | Total Payment £ per week |
|--------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Child 0-4 | 183.00 | 169.00 | 352.00 |
| Parent 11-15 | 242.00 | 246.00 | 488.00 |
| Parent 16-18 | 296.00 | 246.00 | 542.00 |

There will be a review about financial contributions from parents 18+.

| Training Requirements | |
|--|---|
| The training identified at Level Two must have been completed and the Mandatory training should be up-to-date | |
| Training package to be developed for parent and child carers. | To include - Attachment; giving evidence in court. |
| Other training | Further training to be discussed and agreed with Supervising Social Worker at regular intervals |

Competencies – Parent and Child (Skill Level Four)

1. Caring for Children

- Knowledgeable and up to date about normal child development.
- Good knowledge of attachment issues and the importance of promoting primary attachments.

2. Provide a Safe and Caring Environment

- Good awareness and understanding of child protection and risk factors.
- Provide a good level of supervision to the parent, where concerns are responded to quickly and effectively.
- Ability to work with birth parents and maintain a good relationship, whilst keeping a clear child focus.
- Available to provide the appropriate level of supervision for the duration of the placement.
- Able to work to an agreed plan and to be adaptable to changes.
- Recognising the importance of the parent and child's, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, gender, sexuality and disability and working in a non-discriminatory manner.
- Ability to work within a legal framework.

3. Working as Part of a Team

- Good communication skills.
- Able to work closely with health visitors and other health professionals.
- Ability to attend meetings as required and provide clear written and verbal feedback distinguishing fact from opinion.
- Ability to work as part of a team, alongside other professionals.

4. Professionalism and Personal Development

- To complete detailed, reflective and timely recordings as well as reports any significant concerns about a child/young person or their own ability to care for a child to their supervising social worker.
- The capacity to engage in and develop professionally through reflective supervision.
- An openness to discuss what impact fostering is likely to have/has had on themselves/their families and relationships.
- Can demonstrate a commitment to ongoing training and putting learning into practice and able to evidence previous relevant training undertaken. An ability and willingness to further own knowledge by self-guided learning e.g. reading, media search.

c. Disability Programme (Skill Level Four)

This programme will provide care for children with disabilities supported by the Children's Disability Team.

Short Breaks Carers

This programme offers short break care for children with disabilities to support their parents and carers.

Current allowances for short breaks are complex and are not usually paid at an hourly rate. However, if the need arises during introductions, payments will be made at the following rates:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Up to and including 2 hours: | £17 |
| Over 2 up to 4 hours: | £23 |
| Over 4 up to 6 hours: | £26 |
| Over 6 up to 8 hours: | £29 |
| Over 8 up to 12 hours: | £34 |

Short Breaks Rates

Foster carer allowances for overnight short break care:

Allowance & Skills Payment - Short Breaks - Rate A – Standard Rate

Rate A - Standard Rate - Foster carer allowances for overnight short break care: in view of the complex nature of their needs Short Break carers.

| Age Band | Nightly Rate £ per night |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| 0-4 | 58.00 |
| 5-10 | 60.00 |
| 11-15 | 70.00 |
| 16-18 | 77.00 |

Allowance & Skills Payment - Short Breaks - Rate B – Enhanced Rate

Short Breaks - Rate B - For children who need an enhanced level of care (need significant attention throughout the night):

| Age Band | Nightly Rate £ per night |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| 0-4 | 84.00 |
| 5-10 | 86.00 |
| 11-15 | 92.00 |
| 16-18 | 100.00 |

Disability – Short and Long Care

Allowance & Skills Payment – Disability – Short/Long term care Rate A – Standard Rate

| Age Band | Maintenance Allowance £ per week | Skills Fee £ per week | Total Payment £ per week |
|----------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 0-4 | 183.00 | 224.00 | 407.00 |
| 5-10 | 195.00 | 224.00 | 419.00 |
| 11-15 | 242.00 | 246.00 | 488.00 |
| 16-18 | 296.00 | 246.00 | 542.00 |

Allowance & Skills Payment – Disability – Short/Long term care Rate B – Enhanced Rate

Children who need an enhanced level of care (e.g. significant seizures, significant medical/health needs, care during the night, high levels of challenging behaviour).

| Age Band | Maintenance Allowance £ per week | Skills Fee £ per week | Total Payment £ per week |
|----------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 0-4 | 183.00 | 405.00 | 588.00 |
| 5-10 | 195.00 | 405.00 | 600.00 |
| 11-15 | 242.00 | 405.00 | 647.00 |
| 16-18 | 296.00 | 405.00 | 701.00 |

Training Requirements

**All Mandatory and required training detailed at Level 2 must be completed.
Short Break Carers will need to complete induction standards within 12 months of first placement.**

| | |
|---|---|
| Child specific training via Community Nursing team | Will be organised via your Supervising Social Worker |
| Lifting and Handling | If appropriate |
| Attachment | Required training: short and long-term foster carers. Course to be arranged, details to follow |
| Other training | Further training to be discussed and agreed with Supervising Social Worker at regular intervals |

Competencies – Disability Programme (Skill Level Four)

1. Caring for Children

- Foster carers provide a high, individualised standard of care to children with a disability that promotes their development in all areas of need and includes emotional warmth, nurturing, development of social and personal like skills as well as understanding.
- A good understanding and the ability to reflect on the impact that the disability may have on all areas of development.
- An ability and willingness to take part in therapeutic work with children with appropriate supervision and consultation.
- To support children/young people with their education to help them reach their full potential.
- To support children in accessing relevant after school and holiday activities.
- To help a child communicate their own thoughts and feelings and if required learn a related communication skill i.e. Makaton or relevant IT based programmes (Proloquo2go).
- Able to manage additional medical needs, care routines and behaviour management plans, with appropriate training and support.

2. Providing a Safe and Caring Environment

- Assess the risks a child might pose to self, others and/or environment and the risk others might pose to the child and act to reduce this.
- Good awareness and understanding of child protection and risk factors.
- A level of understanding and experience of managing risk, allowing planned risk taking as part of the child's growing needs and development.
- Ability to distinguish between behaviours which may be a result of past trauma and those that are expected as part of usual childhood development and/or characteristic of the child's diagnosis.
- Able to work to an agreed plan and to be adaptable to change.
- Recognising the important of the child's, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, gender, sexuality and disability and working in a non-discriminatory manner.
- Able to advocate for the child where necessary.

3. Working as Part of a Team

- Good communication skills.
- Ability to work closely and as part of team, alongside social care, health and educational professionals to ensure there is a joined-up child centred approach to the disabled child's needs in your care.
- To ensure that information is kept confidential and to understand when it is appropriate to share this.

4. Professionalism and Personal Development

- Completes detailed, reflective and timely recordings as well as report any significant concerns about a child or their own ability to care for a child to their supervising social worker. To maintain records on medication and health to share with health professionals as necessary.
- Capacity to engage in and develop professionally through reflective supervision.

- An openness to discuss what impact fostering is likely to have/has had on themselves/their families and relationships.
- Can demonstrate a commitment to ongoing training and application in practice and able to evidence previous relevant training undertaken. An ability and willingness to further own knowledge by self-guided learning e.g. reading, media search.

D. Mockingbird Hub Carer – Level Four

Mockingbird Hub carers are experienced foster carers who provide support to other local foster carers, adopters and special guardians. They organise regular events and can provide relief care to support the placements. These hubs help to create the sense of an extended family and community.

Mockingbird - Weekly Allowance and Additional Fee £ (will be provided pro rata for relief care)

The hub carer receives a weekly fee of £458 and will receive remuneration as follows for any relief care placements:

| Age Band | Allowance | * Additional Fee (fixed) | Total Payment |
|----------|-----------|--------------------------|---------------|
| 0-4 | 183.00 | 25.00 | 208.00 |
| 5-10 | 195.00 | 28.00 | 223.00 |
| 11-15 | 242.00 | 35.00 | 277.00 |
| 16-18 | 296.00 | 42.00 | 338.00 |

* Not subject to inflationary increases.

Staying Put – Young People Aged 18+

A young person's legal status changes at 18 as they cease to be looked after and the local authority's responsibilities towards them change, particularly in relation to the provision of financial support. The arrangement becomes Staying Put and is governed by the care leavers legislation and statutory guidance. This arrangement can continue until the young person is 21.

In all cases, plans for leaving care need to be in place, through the Care Plan and Pathway Plan, well in advance of the young person's 18th birthday. It is the social worker's responsibility to ensure the young person receives any benefits and grants they are eligible for.

All young people will be expected to contribute to their housing costs from their income or from benefits they may be entitled to. All young people will contribute £30 a week for their living cost, plus accommodation costs via their income or housing benefit.

The Staying Put allowance is £280.00 per week.

Supported Lodgings

Young people age 16+ who are more independent and do not require care can be offered accommodation with an approved Supported Lodgings host. The Supported Lodgings host will offer up to ten hours support a week to help the young person with independent living skills.

The Supported Lodgings allowance is £280.00 per week.

Young People age 18+ will be expected to contribute to their housing costs from their income or from benefits they may be entitled to. All young people will contribute £30 a week for their living cost, plus accommodation costs via their income or housing benefit. The young person will pay their carer directly and the Staying Put allowance will be reduced accordingly.

Special Guardianship

A Special Guardianship Order is a court order that gives parental responsibility to carer(s) and the child is no longer looked after. These orders last until the child is eighteen. A Support Plan is put in place and if the child was looked after, an allowance will be paid subject to a means tested financial assessment.

Please speak to your Supervising Social Worker for further details.

Relief Foster Care

Relief care, when agreed as part of a child's care plan, is paid at the appropriate age related weekly rate on a pro rata basis, i.e. 1/7 of the weekly rate per day, including the day of arrival and the day of departure.

When a child is absent from the foster home for periods of up to two nights/three days in any one calendar month for Level 1 and Level 2 carers or up to three nights/ four days for Level 3, the main foster carer will continue to receive the full allowance.

Additional Allowances and Expenses for Foster Carers Only

These expenses do not apply to Special Guardians, Supported Lodging carers or Staying Put arrangements.

Birthdays, Christmas/Celebration, Summer Holiday

To assist in the additional expenses associated with a child's birthday or other celebration e.g. Christmas, Eid-ul-Fitr, an additional allowance will be paid in the week before the child's birthday or the celebration. The summer holiday activity allowance will be paid in July each year. If the child is not placed for the full summer holiday period, then a percentage of the allowance will be paid. These rates are as follows:

| Age Band | Birthday Allowance £ | Christmas/Celebration Allowance £ | Summer Holiday Allowance £ |
|----------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 0-4 | 139.00 | 139.00 | 300.00 |
| 5-10 | 156.90 | 156.90 | 300.00 |
| 11-15 | 194.80 | 194.80 | 300.00 |
| 16-18 | 237.98 | 237.98 | 300.00 |

Claim Procedure

Childcare

Childcare costs will be reimbursed in respect of the carer's own children and / or a foster child(ren) in relation to the following:

- (1) Attendance at review meetings, planning meetings, case conferences, etc.
- (2) Contact arrangements
- (3) Medical and associated appointments for foster child
- (4) Attendance at training and support groups

The Fostering Service will reimburse childcare costs up to £10 per hour.

Foster carer must gain agreement from their supervising social worker. Childcare expense form must be completed by the foster carer and forwarded with receipts to their Supervising Social Worker.

Please ask your Supervising Social Worker for a copy of the form to claim these expenses.

Child not in placement

This covers certain circumstances where the child is away from the foster home for longer periods, but the foster carer is still incurring e.g. lengthy in-patient hospital treatment.

Continuation of the allowance can be agreed for up to 14 nights at 50% of the allowance and 100% of the skills payment and over 14 nights, 0% of the allowance and 50% of the skills payment.

Domestic Assistance – child related

In exceptional circumstances, the Department will provide or fund domestic assistance. Examples of this would be to meet the needs arising from the foster carer's ill health, the placement of a large sibling group or the particular needs of the foster child.

This will need full discussion with your supervising social worker and approval by the Fostering Team Manager.

Educational / Residential Holiday Trips

If the school are unable to assist with the cost, the service will meet the cost of a residential trip at least once during the child's primary school and once during the child's secondary school.

Emergency Clothing

This weekly allowance is designed to meet the ongoing clothing costs and it is expected that a child will have adequate clothing upon entering a placement, including school uniform. However, when a child is placed in an emergency, they may have insufficient or inappropriate clothing on arrival. As this is designed to cover emergencies, authorisation is limited to the beginning of a placement.

Up to £100 agreed in advance with your supervising social worker/child's social worker (receipts must be provided)

| Claim Procedure | |
|--|---|
| Emergency Placements made same day | |
| Foster Carers who receive children at very short notice on the same day as the request is made, will receive a “same day placement” payment. | £50 one off payment |
| Equipment | |
| <p>When a new foster carer is approved there may be a need for essential equipment and furniture to care for a child and a one-off payment can be applied for. This may include pushchairs, car seats, beds, bedding, chest of drawers etc. Purchases should be agreed in advance with your supervising social worker.</p> <p>If there is deliberate damage or excessive wear and tear of furniture caused by a child in your care, please discuss with the Fostering Team Manager and consideration will be given to a contribution to repair or replace the item.</p> <p>If specialised equipment is required for disabled children, the Supervising Social Worker can apply for funding via the Occupational therapist.</p> | Purchases should be agreed in advance with your supervising social worker up to the value of £500 (receipts must be provided) |
| Nappy Allowance | |
| <p>This is already included in the allowance for 0 - 4-year-old.</p> <p>Children with disabilities who are incontinent will receive these via Health Services.</p> | £8 per week – request to be discussed and agreed with the supervising social worker. |
| Retainer payments | |
| Payable when foster carers are specifically available for a named child/young person, when it's unclear if/when the placement is required. This could include situations where the care plan is uncertain e.g., family-based care or rehabilitation home. | Half of the skills fee will be paid for up to four weeks in agreement with the Fostering Team Manager. |

Claim Procedure

Shared care with a child who is at Boarding School

There is an expectation that carers will care for the child when they are not at school including school holidays. Also, to attend school events, statutory meetings, transport to and from school (mileage expenses can be claimed) and that they will provide clothing, toiletries, pocket money and savings for the young person throughout the year.

The foster carer will receive a set allowance and fee over a 52-week period that will be based on the time the child is at home, plus clothing, toiletries, pocket money and savings throughout the year.

Foster carers will also be eligible for birthday, festival and holiday allowances. These will not be automated payments and need to be arranged by your Supervising Social Worker.

Foster carers are expected to undertake training and deliver the competencies commensurate with their particular Skill Level.

Unforeseen and Exceptional Circumstances

Occasionally a Child's Care Plan will involve the foster carer making an exceptional expenditure. For instance, the child might need a specialist service, or the child's behaviour may lead to additional costs (e.g., damage not covered by the foster carer's insurance). Such circumstances should be brought to the attention of your child's social worker and/or your supervising social worker, and then reimbursement will be discussed. In extremely rare situations, when the child has exceptional needs, this may result in ongoing supplementary allowance enhancement.

To be agreed initially by the Fostering Service Manager. To be followed up in writing including a review frequency.

Foster Carers' Travel Expenses

Travel (excluding Therapeutic Foster Care)

Foster carers' transport expenses will be paid as follows:

- (a) Medical and associated treatment matters for the child
- (b) Therapeutic appointments/programmes for the child
- (c) Journeys to/from child's contact with the birth family members
- (d) Journeys associated with the child's move to another adoptive or foster family, including relief care
- (e) Travel to review meetings, Case Conferences and foster carer support groups
- (f) Travel to training

Reasonable costs include transport at 43.7 pence per mile, public transport fares, and taxi fares (by prior agreement of Fostering Manager) when there is no reasonable alternative - receipts are to be submitted for payment to be made. Taxis should only be used when there is no alternative safe or timely option. These must be agreed and organised by the child's social worker through our transport department.

Travel to training is paid at 20 pence per mile, and in addition, 5 pence per mile per passenger.

Mileage must be claimed monthly via the portal unless there are exceptional circumstances. Mileage costs cannot be paid for any claims submitted more than three months after the costs were incurred, unless approved in exceptional circumstances by the Fostering Service Manager.

Transport to School (excluding Therapeutic Foster Care)

If a child is placed more than three miles from their local school and it is considered in the child's best interests to remain there, the service will meet carer's school transport costs (less the daily 12-mile return journeys).

If children with special needs attend a designated school, Children's Services will meet the cost of transport. If children attend the local school, foster carers are expected to ensure they are safely transported to school each day.

Transport to School (Children with Disabilities)

If a child with a disability attends the nearest special school, approved by the local authority they will usually be entitled to free school transport. If the local authority identifies another school because there are no spaces at the most local school, free transport will be provided. However, if the child lives close by the school, then transport will not be provided.

Transport (Therapeutic Foster Care)

Provision is made within the basic fostering allowance and fee to cover regular travel costs e.g. transport to the weekly Therapeutic Foster Care meeting, attending reviews, outings, hospital appointments etc. Where the weekly mileage for travel to school and/or to contact exceeds 250 miles, mileage will be paid for the additional miles over 250.

Car Loan Scheme

It may be possible for carers to obtain a loan for the purchase of a suitable vehicle subject to certain eligibility criteria. Please ask your Supervising Social Worker for more details.

Pocket Money and Savings

All children should receive pocket money and regular savings from the allowance to be confirmed at the Placement Planning Meeting. See recommended levels below:

| Recommended Minimum Levels | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Age | Pocket Money £ per week | Savings £ per week |
| 0–4 | 3.00 | 3.00 |
| 5-10 | 4.00 | 4.00 |
| 11–15 | 5.00 | 5.00 |
| 16–18 | 6.00 | 6.00 |

Please refer to Foster Carer Handbook for further information, using the link below:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/children-education-and-families/fostering/information-our-existing-foster-carers/handbook>

Children with Disabilities in Foster Care

Children with disabilities who have particular needs placing extra requirements on the foster carer. It is the social worker's role to maximise the benefits the child receives, and foster carers can receive these in addition to fostering allowances to enable them to support the child. These benefits include:

Disability Living Allowance:

This has both a care and mobility (over 5 years only) component, the former is paid at three rates according to the level of care and the latter at two rates.

<https://www.gov.uk/disability-living-allowance-children>

Disability Carer's Allowance:

For carers caring for someone receiving Disability Living Allowance.

You will need to record your expenditure for the child's DLA component.

Disability Living Allowance – Mobility component

If a child receives the high mobility rate, carers have the option to exchange the mobility allowance for an affordable lease car.

<https://www.motability.co.uk/about/>

Method of Payment

Payments will be made directly into your bank account on a Friday for the current week. A bank details form needs to be completed (available via your Supervising Social Worker) and sent to the Foster Care Payments Team when you become approved as a foster carer. Foster carers are paid both for the day of arrival and the day of departure of a foster child.

Travel expenses will be reimbursed once a month and mileage forms will need to be submitted via the portal by the 15th day each month.

Over-Payments

These can occur for a variety of reasons. It is the carer's responsibility to check payments and notify the Foster Care Payments Team immediately if payments have continued in error after a child has left. Any overpayment will need to be repaid.

Payment if child is removed from a placement following an allegation

If a child is removed from the placement following an allegation, the fostering allowance will cease but any skill payment will continue to be paid for four weeks. After this period, 50% of the skills fee may be paid for up to 12 weeks with agreement of the Fostering Service Manager.

Insurance

All foster carers on approval are provided with individual National Fostering Network membership unless they request otherwise. Carers approved in an emergency, under regulation 24, will have legal membership only.

The National Fostering Network membership includes public liability insurance and access to free legal advice. You should inform your household and motor insurers that you are caring for other people's children. For further information, please visit <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/get-involved/membership/foster-carer-membership>

State Benefits

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD FOSTER CHILDREN BE IDENTIFIED BY GIVING THEIR NAMES

Foster carers who think that either they or the children/young people in their care may be eligible for these should seek independent advice. The Department for Work & Pensions has an excellent website www.dwp.gov.uk with an A to Z that explains the various benefits in detail.

Child Benefit

Child benefit cannot be claimed for foster children, nor can Child Tax Credit, the childcare component of Working Tax Credit and school meals.

Tax and Benefits

When you start to foster you need to register as self-employed so are responsible for your own tax and National Insurance affairs. In your tax return you will be able to claim a tax exemption of up to £18,140 per household from what you earn from fostering. You will still pay tax on money you earn from a job or investment. You will also qualify for tax relief for

every week (or part week) that you foster a child, £375 per week for a child under 11 and £450 per week for a child of 11 or over.

You may be entitled to National insurance credits which count towards your State Pension.

Example:

Laura is a foster carer for a 14-year-old for the whole of the year and for an 8-year-old for 10 weeks of the year. She does not have to pay tax on the first £45,290 she earns:

| | |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Tax exemption | = £18,140 |
| | + |
| Child 1 (52 x £450) | = £32,400 |
| | + |
| Child 2 (10 x £375) | = £3,750 |
| Total | = £45,290 |

Foster carers who have previously filled in Self-Assessment forms solely for foster caring may be sent a questionnaire by HM Revenue & Customs, which should mean they are removed from the system. However, if they do still receive a Self-Assessment form, it must be completed and returned, even if their net income from foster care is too low to pay tax and National Insurance.

You could be entitled to Working Tax Credit. Further details about claiming benefits available via the link below.

[Help and support for foster parents in England: Claiming benefits - GOV UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/help-and-support-for-foster-parents-in-england-claiming-benefits)

Foster carers are eligible to claim Disability Living Allowance from the DWP for a foster child with disabilities that are extensive enough to qualify for this benefit. It is paid to whoever is responsible for looking after the child on a day-to-day basis.

The main government guidance for the information for foster carers:

[Becoming a foster parent in England - Help with the cost of fostering](#) and Help Sheet 236

[HS236 Qualifying care relief: foster carers, adult placement carers, kinship carers and staying put carers \(2023\)](#)

The first of these contains a great deal of information and is written in a user-friendly style. The second of these is specifically to help foster carers when drawing up the Self-Employment pages of their annual Self-Assessment Return and, as such, a fresh version is issued each tax year. The Council recommends that foster carers appoint their own accountant unless they feel particularly competent to do their own profit & loss account and Self-Assessment Return themselves, and it is advisable to get an accountant who knows about the foster care tax regime.

Contacts and Additional Information

If you have any queries about issues in this leaflet, please ask your Supervising Social Worker or contact the Payments Team (Foster Care):

You can view your payment remittance and raise queries using the portal.

Tel: 03300 241814

Email: carepaymentqueries@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Additional information can be obtained from:

www.fostering.net

www.dwp.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education

www.oxfordshirewelfarerights.btck.co.uk

www.gov.uk