



STOKE-ON-TRENT CITY COUNCIL

GUIDANCE TO FOSTERING ALLOWANCES

2014 - 2015

	Contents	Page
1	Introduction	4
2	Administration of the scheme	4
3	Weekly Maintenance Allowances	5
4	Expenditure covered by the weekly maintenance allowance	5
5	Holidays & Holiday Allowances	6
6	Birthdays Allowances	6
7	Religious Festivals / Christmas Allowances	6
8	Mileage Rates	6
9	Initial set up payments	7
10	Initial clothing allowance	7
11	Cases and Holdalls	7
12	School uniform allowance	7
13	School/Educational trips	8
14	Pocket money	8
15	Encouraging talents and abilities	8
16	Spectacles/contact lenses	8
17	Child care expenses	8
18	Adoption introductions	8
19	Insurance	9
20	Children with Disabilities	9
21	Young People in Employment	9
22	Single parenthood	9
23	Special Payment Schemes	10
24	Tax Payments	10

Contents		Page
25	Financial record keeping	10
26	Additional payments	10
27	Loans	11
28	Resolution of difficulties	11
Appendices		
A	Payroll dates 2014/15	12
B	Mileage Claim Form	13

Fostering Allowances

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out the allowances paid to all foster carers approved by Stoke-on-Trent People Directorate, Vulnerable Children and Corporate Parenting.
- 1.2 A copy of this guidance will be sent to every approved foster carer whenever a change in its content occurs and to every newly approved foster carer.

2.0 Administration of the scheme

Timing of payments

- 2.1 The payment period runs from Monday to Sunday, a remittance advice or cheque received on the Friday/Saturday will be in respect of the fortnight ending that Sunday. A list of the payment dates are attached (See Appendix A – Payroll dates).
- 2.2 Payments are made by BACS. BACS payments allow for personal withdrawals of cash from the Friday. Alternatively, a cheque can be issued but cheques can take up to 5 days to clear through a bank account or longer via building society accounts. It should be noted that BACS transfer is considered a more secure method of payment compared to cheques sent through the post.
- 2.3 Allowances will continue to be paid when a child/young person has an unplanned absence from placement for 3 days or less. There will be a **deduction** from this allowance however, when the absence is pre-arranged.
- 2.4 **Child benefit is not payable to foster carers who are in receipt of a weekly fostering allowance.**
- 2.5 Fostering allowances will not be paid to more than one foster carer at a time when a child/young person is receiving respite elsewhere. Payment to the permanent/full time carer will continue to the day the child/young person leaves and recommence on the day the child/young person returns.
- 2.6 Payments to the respite foster carer will be made from the day the child/young person arrives and finish on the day the child/young person leaves.
- 2.7 **Responsibilities of the Child/Young Person's Social Work Teams**
The child's social worker is responsible for notifying the payments team as soon as a placement is made, a placement ends or a child/young person moves to another foster carer.
- 2.8 **Responsibilities of the Supervising Social Worker**
The supervising social worker will provide advice and consultation to the foster carer regarding the use of allowances to meet the needs of any child/young person placed with them. It is the responsibility of the supervising social worker to ensure that the carer is spending the allowance appropriately. It is also the responsibility of the supervising social worker to notify Finance of any additional payments due to the carer(s) (See section 28.0)

Responsibilities of the Foster Carer

- 2.9 The foster carer must notify their supervising social worker immediately if payments continue after a placement has ended. If there are no continuing payments from which an overpayment can be deducted or recouped, the foster carer must make suitable arrangements to repay any outstanding amount.
- 2.10 It is the responsibility of the foster carer to budget for the child/young person's needs and to exercise their discretion in making day to day decisions about expenditure. The foster carer will consult with other parties namely the child/young person, their parents, child/young person's social worker and the supervising social worker with regards to expenditure. This consultation will take place at the placement agreement meeting and will be reviewed on a regular basis based on the individual child's needs and care plan.
- 2.11 It is the responsibility of the foster carer to use the weekly allowance to make adequate provision for events, activities and occasions in the life of the child/young person as outlined in 4.0 - Expenditure covered by the weekly maintenance allowance.

NON DISCRETIONARY PAYMENTS

3.0 Weekly Maintenance Allowances

<u>Age</u>	<u>Weekly Rate</u>
0 - 4	£127.61
5 - 10	£145.39
11 - 15	£180.95
16 +	£220.08

4.0 Expenditure covered by the weekly maintenance allowance

- Food – including food appropriate to the child/young person's culture and religion plus any special dietary needs
- School Dinner money
- Clothing/Shoes - including new clothes for religious festivals e.g.: Diwali and Eid
- Party clothes
- Youth organisation clothes and fees
- Nappies
- Self-care/pocket money
- Toys/books/games equipment
- All sporting activities and equipment except those played at school which are covered by the school uniform allowance
- Hobbies - music, dancing, sport. There is a clear expectation that foster carers will pay for at least one prescribed leisure activity for their fostered child/young person.
- Subscription to clubs
- Treats/outings - including school day trips
- Presents for child/young person's friends
- Playschool/nursery fees

- Household costs - includes cost of breakages of minor items in daily use, additional electricity/gas. Wear and tear on furniture, carpets, etc., telephone, durable goods e.g. TV, washing machine, etc.
- Baby-sitters
- Expenses incurred in maintaining contact with the child/young person's parents and siblings within own home
- Travel involves any journeys which result from the fostering tasks. The first 10 miles per day per household is covered by the weekly maintenance allowance for the child/young person. Any additional mileage can be separately claimed. Such travel includes attending meetings, case conferences, contact, court; travel to and from local schools, medicals etc. (See Appendix B - Mileage Claim Form).
- Replacement equipment – bedding, bed sheets, towels, waterproof sheets, beds, cots, bedroom furniture, baby equipment (Please see under initial set up money).

5.0 Holidays & Holiday Allowances

- 5.1 A payment of two week's additional allowance, based on age bands, will be made automatically for each child/young person early in June each year. If a child is placed after this date a discretionary payment can be triggered by the Principal Manager Fostering.

6.0 Birthday Allowances

- 6.1 One week's additional allowance, based on age bands, will be paid in the fortnight's payments prior to the period in which the child/young person birthday falls. This payment is made to enhance the child's birthday experience i.e. through celebrations and presents.

7.0 Religious Festival / Christmas Allowances

- 7.1 One week's additional allowance, based on age bands, will be paid early in December or can be triggered where appropriate for the child's cultural needs as discussed at the placement agreement meeting.

8.0 Mileage Rates

- 8.1 After the first 10 miles per day per household foster carers can claim additional mileage at a rate of 50p per mile up to 50 miles, any mileage thereafter will be at a rate of 18p per mile.
- 8.2 After the first £4.50 per day, foster carers can claim for a child's bus fares. Any such claims should have been discussed and agreed at the child's placement agreement meeting.
- 8.3 Mileage and bus fares can be claimed on the Travel Expenses Claim Form which must be approved by the Practice Manager Fostering (See Appendix B – Travel Expenses Claim Form).
- 8.4 Where mileage is incurred as a result of a foster carer attending a training course, the first 10 miles per day will not be deducted. Such mileage should be claimed on a separate Travel Expenses Claim Form.

9.0 Initial Set Up Payments

- 9.1 At the point of initial placement, foster carers approved for babies between 0 to 2 years old will be given a payment of up to £750 for all their “set up costs”.
- 9.2 At the point of initial placement, foster carers approved for children/young people aged 3 years old and above will be given a payment of up to £500 for their set up costs.
- 9.3 In some exceptional cases there maybe a significant change in the approval of a carer, and therefore new equipment may be required. Any such change will be assessed by the supervising social worker regarding any items which need to be purchased. The request for an additional set up payment will be made by the supervising social worker to the Principal or Practice Manager Fostering and no money will be paid until this is agreed. There will be an expectation that receipts will be provided to match the costs of any costs incurred.
- 9.4 Once the initial set up payment has been made, the foster carer will be required to budget for the replacement and maintenance costs from their weekly allowance unless there are exceptional circumstances. If foster carers feel this applies to their case they must discuss this with their supervising social worker.
- 9.5 In some cases for continuity and best practice, items of equipment purchased may move with the child but these items will be repurchased where appropriate for future placements.

DISCRETIONARY PAYMENTS

NB. As these are discretionary payments and depend on the individual needs of the child, foster carers must obtain agreement in writing from the Principal Manager Fostering before incurring expenditure. Foster carers will need to provide receipts as evidence of how any discretionary payment have been spent.

10.0 Initial Clothing Allowance

- 10.1 An additional allowance may be paid at the beginning of a placement if the child/young person arrives with little or no adequate clothing or it has been impossible to collect clothing from the child/young person’s previous home. This allowance will be discretionary and cover the immediate needs of the child.

11.0 Cases and Holdalls

- 11.1 The weekly allowance covers the cost of a case or holdall for a child who goes on holiday or has respite or who moves to another placement

12.0 School uniform allowance

- 12.1 A payment of £100 will be made for children starting school for the first time, and £150 for children transferring from a primary to a secondary school. Supervising social workers will need to request this payment on behalf of the foster carer. The weekly allowance covers replacement clothing but if a child moves into a new placement and this involves

moving to a new school a payment will be considered up to the above amounts to cover the cost of additional school uniform.

13.0 School / Educational trips

13.1 These should be budgeted for from the weekly allowance paid.

13.2 Exceptionally, where a trip is of specific educational value e.g. as part of a national examination, the foster carer would be expected to fund part of the trip. Any request for additional financial support towards the cost of the trip should be discussed with the supervising social worker.

14.0 Pocket Money

14.1 Although the amount of money that the child may have available to spend each week may vary, it is the expectation that the carer will save any surplus funds allocated to their pocket money. The allocation of pocket money should be negotiated and agreed at the placement agreement meeting.

15.0 Encouraging Talents and Abilities

15.1 Usual out of school activities will be funded from the fostering allowances. However where a child /young person has an exceptional talent or ability e.g. sporting or musical skills, application can be made for additional funding to the Principal Manager Fostering or through the child's personal education plan.

16.0 Spectacles / Contact Lenses

16.1 In the case of a child/young person who requires spectacles or contact lenses, an additional payment of up to £100 can be claimed on one occasion per annum. Any additional costs (e.g. insurances and cleaning fluids) must be met from the weekly allowance. Children who require spectacles or contact lenses must be seen by a qualified optometrist.

17.0 Child care expenses

17.1 A basic expectation of foster carer's approval to provide a service is to attend reviews, case conferences and other meetings concerning the children placed with them, regardless of any other family or registered childminding responsibilities.

17.2 The only exception to this is where the foster carer has two or more placements and attending a meeting for one child, means that alternative care is needed for the other(s) which involves payment. The carer may be reimbursed at the current hourly rate for childminding but only if this has been discussed with the supervising social worker and agreed beforehand.

18.0 Adoption Introductions

18.1 When foster carers provide hospitality in their own home as part of adoption introductions, they can claim a hospitality payment of up to £9 per day and up to a maximum of £45 per week.

19.0 Insurance

- 19.1 It is the responsibility of the carer to advise their household insurers that they are fostering. Foster carers needing to make a claim because of loss or damage caused by a foster child should immediately check with their own insurance company whether that company will cover the cost of the claim.
- 19.2 If the carer's own insurance company provides written confirmation that they will not cover the cost of the claim, the foster carer should provide the supervising social worker with details of the damage/loss, the circumstances surrounding this, receipts for any damaged/missing items and quotes for any remedial work necessary. In such circumstances the supervising social worker must submit a report to the Principal Manager Fostering who will make a decision re payment in relation to claims or the excess on the foster carers own insurance policy..
- 19.3 Where a claim is made through a foster carer's own insurance policy, Stoke-on-Trent City Council will pay the excess incurred and with written confirmation of the amount from the insurance company, will fund the additional insurance premium costs for the following year's renewal.
- NB.** All claims will require proof of receipts and should be submitted within 28 days of the incident.

20.0 Children with disabilities

- 20.1 If a child/young person has special needs, any entitlement to benefits, e.g. DLA will not affect the weekly fostering allowance. The child's social worker will assist where necessary in applying to the Department of Works and Pensions for DLA and any other appropriate state benefits which could be paid to a foster carer e.g. DLA or mobility allowance.
- 20.2 Where a child is in receipt of DLA, the expenditure of this allowance will be agreed at the placement agreement meeting. In cases where DLA is awarded during a placement, a PAM will be arranged.

21.0 Young people in employment

- 21.1 Where a child ceases full time education or commences employment, a placement agreement meeting must be arranged to discuss expenditure.
- 21.2 Young people aged 16 and over who are not in employment and education may be entitled to claim income support. If they are incapable of work due to ill health or are a single parent.

22.0 Single parenthood

- 22.1 If foster carers are asked to care for a young woman and her baby, in most cases the mother is in legal terms "in care" and not the baby.
- 22.2 Fostering allowances are paid for the mother and an additional allowance for the baby is calculated by the mother's social worker, at the current rate of income support for a child

that age. This additional allowance is funded from Section 17 budgets and is arranged by the mother's social worker.

- 22.3 Very careful planning and clear written agreements are required to cover the financial arrangements for mother and baby placements. Such arrangements need to be reviewed on a regular basis with the mother's social worker.

23.0 Special Payment Schemes

23.1 Family Link/Short Breaks/Remand

The weekly rate for foster carers approved on these schemes will be £490.07.

The daily rate is:

Overnight Stay	£70.01
----------------	--------

Day care	£35.01
----------	--------

- 23.2 Where a child is placed for longer than 7 days, the carer will be paid £270 per week plus the age related maintenance allowance for the child.

24.0 Tax Payments

- 24.1 Foster carers are responsible for paying their own income tax and national insurance contributions and must contact HM Revenue & Customs to register themselves as self-employed when they are approved at panel.

- 24.2 There is a national agreement regarding tax allowances for approved foster carers. During the tax year, carers will receive a fixed tax allowance, dependent upon the child/young person's age when placed with the carer in that year. A tax statement will only be sent to carers if a taxable amount is required to be paid for payments received above this allowance.

- 24.3 The Fostering Network and local HM Revenue and Customs office can provide full current information on the allowances which can be claimed.

- 24.4 Further information can be found at <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/individuals/foster-carers.htm> or by contacting HMRC newly employed helpline on 0845 915 4515 to register yourself as self-employed. You can also contact fostering network on **020 7620 6400** for further advice.

25.0 Financial record keeping

- 25.1 It is important that foster carers budget their weekly payments on a year round basis in order to ensure that children/young people's needs are met.

- 25.2 Keeping records will assist foster carers when requesting any discretionary or exceptional payments as expenditure on the child can then be accounted for.

26.0 Additional Payments

26.1 Recruitment payments

£250.00 will be paid to a foster carer introducing a family member or friend to foster for Stoke-on-Trent City Council. The amount will be payable once the person recruited has been approved as a foster carer for Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

26.2 Long service retention payments

- £200.00 will be paid to foster carers who have been fostering for Stoke-on-Trent City Council for 2 years, continuously. This will be payable after the annual review in the second year of fostering.
- £250.00 will be paid to foster carers who have been fostering for Stoke-on-Trent City Council for 5 years, continuously, This will be payable after the annual review in the fifth year of fostering.
- £500.00 will be paid to foster carers who have been fostering for Stoke-on-Trent City Council for 10 years, continuously, payable after the annual review in the tenth year of fostering.
- £500.00 will be paid to foster carers who have been fostering for Stoke-on-Trent City Council for 25 years, continuously, payable after the annual review in the twenty fifth year of fostering.

27.0 Loans

27.1 In some very exceptional circumstances and to facilitate the interest of the child in placement, a financial package for the child may be approved which could include loans/grants or additional allowances.

27.2 These loans are subject to separate procedures which will involve entering into a legally binding agreement in respect of any loan made to the carer. This will ensure any monies paid out will be repaid in full.

28.0 Resolution of difficulties

28.1 If a difficulty arises in relation to the payment of allowances, the foster carer should initially discuss this with their supervising social worker. If this does not resolve the problem then the Practice Manager of the fostering team should be contacted.

28.2 The Principal Manager of the Fostering Team will be the final arbiter unless the matter is referred to and dealt with through Stoke-on-Trent City Council's complaint's procedures.

FOSTERING ALLOWANCES PAYROLL DATES 2014/15

	PAYROLL DATES	PAY DATE	COMMENTS
1	13.01.14 to 26.01.14	24.01.14	
2	27.01.14 to 09.02.14	07.02.14	
3	10.02.14 to 23.02.14	21.02.14	
4	24.02.14 to 09.03.14	07.03.14	
5	10.03.14 to 23.03.14	21.03.14	
6	24.03.14 to 06.04.14	04.04.13	
7	07.04.14 to 20.04.14	18.04.14	
8	21.04.14 to 04.05.14	02.05.14	
9	05.05.14 to 18.05.14	16.05.14	
10	19.05.14 to 01.06.14	30.05.14	
11	02.06.14 to 15.06.14	13.06.14	Holiday Allowance
12	16.06.14 to 29.06.14	27.06.14	
13	30.06.14 to 13.07.14	11.07.14	
14	14.07.14 to 27.07.14	25.07.14	
15	28.07.14 to 10.08.14	08.08.14	
16	11.08.14 to 24.08.14	22.08.14	
17	25.08.14 to 07.09.14	05.09.14	
18	08.09.14 to 21.09.14	19.09.14	
19	22.09.14 to 05.10.14	03.10.14	
20	06.10.14 to 19.10.14	17.10.14	
21	20.10.14 to 02.11.14	31.10.14	
22	03.11.14 to 16.11.14	14.11.14	
23	17.11.14 to 30.11.14	28.11.14	Christmas Allowance
24	01.12.14 to 14.12.14	12.12.14	
25	15.12.14 to 28.12.14	TBA	
26	29.12.14 to 11.01.15	09.01.15	
27	12.01.15 to 25.01.15	23.01.15	
28	26.01.15 to 08.02.15	06.02.15	
29	09.02.15 to 22.02.15	20.02.15	
30	23.02.15 to 08.03.15	06.03.15	
31	09.03.15 to 22.03.15	20.03.15	

To: Provider & Foster Payments Team

Location: Swift House A
Fax: 5994
Tel: 6742/5011/5251



Travel Expenses

Foster Carer Name

P Number

Foster Carer Address

Any mileage after the first 10 miles per day per household will be paid at a rate of £0.50 per mile for the first 50 miles and £0.18 per mile thereafter
Please include details of all mileage for each day claimed and the number of miles for each journey

Date	Description	Mileage	Payments Team Use		

Total £ _____

Signed:

Carer _____

Date _____

Social Worker _____

Date _____

Principal/Practice Manager _____

Date _____

Payments Team Use

	Date	Initial
Payroll		
Manual		