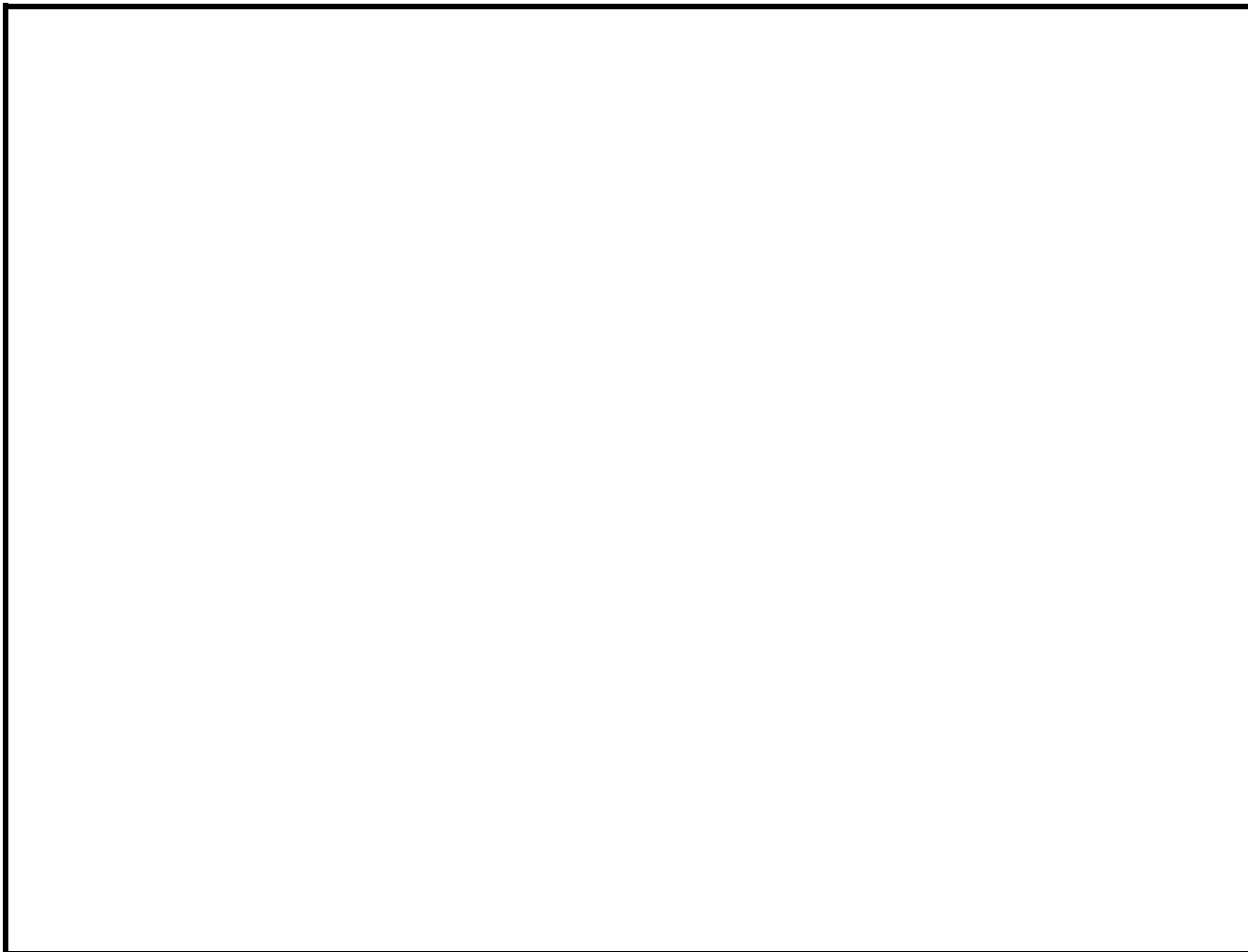


**Wandsworth Children's Services**  
**Fostering Allowances Scheme**  
**April 2022,**  
**(Cost of living uplift included wef 1.11.22)**



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## **FOSTERING ALLOWANCE SCHEME**

### **Introduction**

At the start of each placement the Placement Agreement meeting chaired by the Supervising Social Worker (SSW) will cover all aspects of the placement including the breakdown of the allowance and how individual children's needs can be addressed e.g., clothing, pocket money, savings, dinner money and issues re damage. Part of the discussion will be held with the child/young person (depending on their age and level of understanding.) and the parent. The information discussed will be recorded on the forms and this will be reviewed as part of the regular planning and review process.

Family and Friends foster carers are eligible to receive the 'fostering fee' providing they have completed the Skills to Foster Training, they are eligible to receive the full child related allowance and all other allowances with the exception of the contact payments which will be considered on the basis of the relationships between family members. The fee being paid on completion of the training.

Council approved foster carers are not eligible to apply for child benefit or free school meals for CLA.

### **1. Fee Paid to Carer**

This is paid to the carer and has been set below the tax threshold for carers not paying tax from other income.

The fee is paid for each child	-	£194.40 (age 0 to 10 Years old) per week
	-	£228.30 (age 11 to 17 Years old) per week
Staying Put Fee remains	-	£217.40 (age 11 to 17 Years old)
Staying Put Allowance	-	£210.10

### **Enhanced Fee**

Carers may receive an enhanced (additional) fee of £217.40 for a child in their care. The principle behind the enhanced "top up" fee of £217.40 a week is the recognition of exceptional additional support and tasks required in caring for a child or young person.

An enhancement might be provided in respect of children of any age with severe diagnosed physical disability or learning difficulties, severe emotional and behavioural problems, or a combination of these which will require ongoing care and attention over and above that required by the average looked after child. In order to qualify for an enhanced weekly fee payment, the child's needs will be assessed and presented by the Child's Team Manager/Social Worker and Supervising Social Worker to the CARE Panel who will make a decision in this regard.

Enhanced payments will be reviewed every 6 months. Any decision to end the payments would need to be reviewed and discussed with the social worker and Team

Manager before it is presented to CARE Panel. The following categories have been identified:

- (a) Children with exceptionally high levels of verbal and or physically aggressive behaviour.
- (b) Children who have a history of going regularly “missing from care” and who continue to place themselves at risk.
- (c) Children at risk of sexual exploitation who require a 24/7 level of monitoring and support from the foster carer.
- (d) Children involved in serious and persistent offending behaviour and who have been remanded into local authority care by the youth court.

A letter is sent to each carer in June / July each year outlining their payments in the previous financial year. This letter details payments made in the tax year as determined by HMRC. The HM Revenues & Customs can request copies of the letters sent to foster carers.

Carers who are the subject of a complaint or investigation can be paid the carers fee in line with the complaints and allegations policy. This decision will be made by the Team Manager in consultation with the Service Manager.

In some circumstances the Fostering Service recommends to the Fostering Panel and Agency Decision Maker (ADM) that a carers approval is terminated. If the ADM agrees the carer has 3 options and can challenge this decision. In this case the foster carer may be paid the carers fee where relevant (that is, if they have been in receipt of this until their termination is considered at the Fostering Panel). This payment of the fee will continue until they have accepted the decision, made representations to the Fostering Panel, or asked for their case to be referred to the IRM in line with ‘Qualifying determination’ made by the ADM.

Carers will be advised in writing of any payments they may be eligible to receive during this process and if there are any changes in their eligibility.

## 2. **Age-related Child Allowances**

These are paid for each child / young person who is in placement. The allowance starts from the date the child arrives and is stopped from the day the child leaves. (Although in some cases their belongings may be left at the carers, every effort will be made to collect these ASAP. Belongings left at a carer’s home will not affect the placement of another young person.)

The allowance is not paid if the child has planned respite or is on a school journey or holiday without the carer – although the fee is not affected. The allowance is paid on the day respite starts and the day the child returns but is stopped for each whole day a child is away from the placement.

**Child related allowance per child:**

0 -10	-	£209.80 per week
11 – 17	-	£273.04 per week

Carers will receive the fee / allowances every 2 weeks paid by BACS. A note of monies paid will be sent by the Finance Team in a 'Remittance Advice Notice'. Carers will also receive a corporate advice slip detailing the total amount of money paid into your bank account.

**3. Time-limited retention payments for foster carers**

Once approved as a Wandsworth foster carer, the Fostering Service aims to ensure that carers have children in placement, with only brief periods of inactivity. However, there may be periods of time when this is not possible.

When a placement ends the service will make a time-limited retention payment to the carer. This will consist of the full fee for one child, for a period of 4 weeks at the lowest rate. If a suitable child has not been identified in this period, 50% of the lowest fee will be paid for a further period of up to 4 weeks.

From week 5 it is proposed that a payment at the rate of 50% of the lowest fee continues to be made if the Council has not offered another suitable child/ren to be placed with the carer during the past four-week period. The 50% retainer fee ends after a total of four weeks unless the carer can evidence that the Council has failed to offer them a suitable placement over the full 8-week period. As a maximum, the fee will not be paid after a total of 10 weeks from the end of the last placement in all cases.

Retention payments are conditional on carers' availability to take a child. Carers are also expected to continue to attend training and support groups. The payments will stop if we offer what we consider to be a suitable placement and a carer declines to take it. We will not stop the payments if the Manager agrees that the refusal is reasonable and justified.

If a foster carer is receiving the 4 weeks retention fee and halfway through this period, they take a respite / short term placement of less than 5 days the 4-week retention fee is not affected. After the child leaves the carer will receive the remainder of the 4-week retainer fee due. If there is no other placement, they will start to receive the reduced fee (as long as they continue to meet the criteria).

**4. Breakdown of the Child Related Allowance**

The allowance has been calculated to cover all child related expenditure and carers will find that there is sufficient money to put some money aside each week to budget for items such as sports equipment, winter clothing etc, and to replace toys, equipment, and furnishings as they wear out. This can be between £30 and £50 depending on the age and needs of the child.

The Fostering Service has considerable experience of supporting and working with carers and can offer advice and support to all carers. The WFCA can also offer support.

**Recommended Breakdown of the Weekly Allowance:**

	<b><u>Under 10's</u></b>	<b><u>11+</u></b>
Hair / Skin care	£5.00	£10.00
Leisure	£20.00	£25.00
Clothing	£20.00	£30.00
Food	£34.70	£46.00
Savings	£10.00	£20.00
Pocket money	£2.00 –£5.00	£10.00 – £20.00
Transport	£5.00	£5.00
Schooling Equipment	£5.00	£5.00
Toiletries	£5.00	£5.00
Household Expenses e.g. insurance, heating	£40.00	£40.00
Others - this part of the allowance should be kept replacing furnishings, carp and replacing equipment provided at approval.( this varies according to pocket money )	£41.97- £68.30	£53.74- £77.04
	Total £209.80	Total 273.04

**Recommended Weekly Pocket Money**

We expect carers to keep to the recommended amounts unless there are particular reasons, which should be discussed with the SSW and agreed by the network.

3 –5	£3.00
6 –7	£4.00
8 –10	£6.00
11 – 13	£10.00
14 – 15	£15.00
16+	£20.00

In addition to giving weekly pocket money directly to children, carers are required to open accounts for foster children's savings. Details are available from the Fostering Service about accounts that can easily be opened for CLA. When a young person leaves, the foster carer should pass the account details/passbook to their SSW and should request a written receipt to verify that the money has been handed over. In exceptional circumstances the carer may save cash in a safe place, or in another account, provided they can verify they are saving for the child, and they confirm in writing that they will make this money available at the end of the placement. The savings and pocket money will be regularly discussed and checked by the SSW and reviewed at the Annual Household review and the childcare reviews.

The expected savings are

Under 10's £5 per week

Over 10's £20.00 per week until the child is 18 years.

### **Travel costs**

Each young person over the age of 11 years old should have an Oyster Zip card to cover their bus fares which are free. The tube fare is not free for all children, it only free for under 5 years olds. Full details of what fares are payable at what ages are published on [London Child Fares and Tickets | Children's Transport Prices 2022 \(toptiplondon.com\)](#)

This will be required for trips organised by school, the PST etc.

### **5. Additional Payments**

Carers will receive four additional weeks' payments for the children in placement at these times:

1. Birthdays x 1 week
  2. Summer holidays x 2 weeks
  3. Festival allowance x1 week (cover Eid upon request but would not then receive the normal Christmas allowance)
- These payments are made as follows:
  - Birthdays – payable 28 days before the birthday.
  - Summer holidays – payable in the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of July each year.
  - Festival Allowance – payable on or around 25<sup>th</sup> November each year.

This does not include the carers fees.

Carers are paid for their time supporting the work of Children's Services for example. Participating in recruitment events, attending Corporate Parenting Panel, and attending WFCA committee meetings. These payments can be claimed using the carers expenses form and the rate is £15 per hour.

Respite carers will also receive the 4 weeks additional allowance on a pro rata basis if the Care Plan agreed with the parent / family member supports this e.g., birthdays /festivals  
The level of payment will reflect the frequency of respite offered.

For children placed during the summer holidays the carers will receive the 2-week summer holiday allowance on a pro rata basis.

### **6. Items Not Covered by The Child Related Allowance**

The following expenditure is not covered by the allowance and will be funded by the Social Work Team in discussions with the Social worker.

- Birth Certificates



- Life Story work completed by Social Worker.
- Passports- Social workers should apply for a passport at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Childcare Review if the child is likely to remain accommodated.
- Advocacy /Interpreting costs.
- Any activity identified in the Personal Education Plan will be discussed with Foster Carers. Some activities will be covered by the 'leisure' allowance – the Children Looked After Virtual School Team can fund some additional educational activities. This would be considered only if the leisure allowance is being fully utilised

## 7. **Contact Arrangements.**

Carers play a crucial role in supporting positive and rewarding contact arrangements for CLA and their families. Contact arrangements are agreed and reviewed by the Social Worker and the network on a case-by-case basis. These payments are not paid to Family and Friends carers where contact does not require supervision. This will be discussed and outlined as part of the assessment process and kept under review as required.

The eligible carers can be entitled to claim for the following:

- Transport to and from contact up to 2 hours per contact – inclusive cost of £36
- Supervising contact in their own home @ £18 per hour
- Supervising contact in a family centre or other venue @ £18 per hour
- If contact is held in the carers own home, they can claim a one-off payment of £20 per session

All claims are to be made on the carer's expenses form.

## 8. **Setting Up Costs**

As part of the foster carer's assessment, it may be recommended by the assessing worker that the carers may be eligible for a setting up grant up to £500 to purchase essential equipment once approved. Once a child's room has been equipped, it is the foster carer's responsibility to maintain and replace all items provided at approval, from the child-related allowance.

If, after a Household Review, a change of approval is recommended by Panel, consideration may be given to the purchase of additional equipment.

In exceptional circumstances, the Department will replace items which have been damaged by a child in placement, where these are not covered by the carer's insurance policy.

Smoke Alarms/ First Aid Kit/ Fire blankets and Fire Extinguisher are required as part of Health and Safety and will be checked regularly by the Supervising Social Worker. These can be purchased as part of the setting up costs and thereafter need to be maintained by carers.

## 9. **Out of Hours Arrangement**

Carers who agree to take a placement out of hours (Placements made and agreed after 6pm with the Emergency Duty Team) will be paid a one-off emergency fee of £271.90 for

in-house carers who take a child or young person in an emergency (within 6 hours of the initial referral) and continue caring for the child for a minimum of 4 days. This is in addition to the normal weekly fee.

#### 10. **Emergency Clothing**

If on placement a child requires clothing urgently this should be discussed with the SSW. The Fostering Support and Supervision Team Manager can, in an emergency, agree an exceptional payment of up to £100. If the situation occurs out of hours (at weekends) foster carers should discuss the situation with the Out of Hours duty SSW, who can authorise the carer to purchase any essential items required until the next working day when a fuller discussion can take place with the SW and duty worker. These can be purchased and reimbursed from the first child allowance payment, or, if agreed, on the submission of receipts.

#### 11. **Taking to School**

Carers who take primary children aged under 11 to their school over one mile away from their home can claim a walk to school allowance of £10 per day, up to a maximum of £50 per carer per week. Payments are made on receipt of a walk to school form and claims should be made regularly and no later than the first week of the month following the claim being made. Carers who transport children by car over 3 miles can be paid an increased fee if this avoids the need for taxis.

We acknowledge that some of our secondary-school age looked-after children are particularly vulnerable and need and benefit from being accompanied to school after the age of 11, particularly when settling into new schools or during other periods of upheaval/challenge. Some children with additional needs and disabilities continue to need their carers to take them to school. Carers will need to discuss the circumstances, with the SSW, child's social worker and Team Managers. The agreement would then need to be presented to CARE panel and reviewed every 3 months, as children need to be supported to develop their independence skills.

#### 12. **School Trips**

Carers are expected to save towards the costs of school trips from the child related allowance. The Department will plan with the foster carers the school trips children would like to participate in, as part of the Personal Education Plan (PEP) process. For trips that cost more than the daily child related allowance the department will pay the difference. In 2021/2022 the daily allowance is £29.97 for 0-10 and for the young people aged 11+ £39.00.

If there are exceptional circumstances or several trips due to the child being part of a team, group for sport/ music etc this will be considered at either the PEP or Child Care Reviews and a recommendation made to the Fostering Team Manager. It is important that children/young people are not told of the decision before agreement has been obtained.

#### 13. **Holidays**

Carers are encouraged to take children on holidays with them. All holidays need to be discussed with the SW/SSW and child's parents as appropriate and agreed before a booking is made, no holidays can be agreed in school term time unless there are

exceptional circumstances which need to be initially agreed by the Head Teacher and the Deputy Director. The insurance for holidays needs to be included in the total cost and payable at the outset to cover any last-minute cancellations.

The carers may use the child holiday allowance towards the costs of holiday homes, caravans etc as long as there is evidence that the child has fully used the facility during the year.

Carers can go ahead with a booking once permission has been sought and be reimbursed the costs or arrangements can be made for holiday payments to be paid directly to travel companies.

#### 14. **Disability**

Carers will be supported to claim for Personal Independence Payments (previously known as DLA) of up to £89.15 from the Department of Works and Pensions. This is for any child in the carers care who has a disability.

#### 15. **Spectacles and Contact Lenses**

Carers need to ensure that following an eye test any glasses/prescriptions are obtained using the NHS voucher scheme. Individual needs will be outlined in the Placement Agreement Meeting document completed within the first week of placement and at subsequent reviews of the Care Plan or Personal Health Plans (PHP).

It is anticipated that any child / young person under 16 will be accompanied by their foster carer to an eye test unless agreement has been given at the Placement Agreement Meeting or Child Care Review for the child / young person to attend on their own. If the child wants a more expensive pair of frames, they can be encouraged to save up for them from their pocket money and money can be used from the 'other' section of the child's allowance.

#### 16. **Respite Care**

Carers offering respite will be paid the child related allowance for each 24-hour period that a child is placed with them (plus an additional payment of one 24-hour period per respite.) The carer will also receive the fee on a pro rata basis for the days respite care is offered.

The carer will receive the pro-rata rate for the fee based on the children in placement during the period respite is offered.

The named carer will have the child related allowance deducted for the number of full days respite provided e.g., for a Friday-Sunday respite period the named carer will have one day's child allowance deducted - for the Saturday. For the Friday and Sunday no deduction will be made.

Respite Carers offering respite to a new child will also receive the additional 4-week allowance on a pro rata basis if this was agreed at the Child Care Review.

### 17. **Young People Aged 16**

For those young people in either further education and or work, their Personal Advisor and Social Worker will work with the carers and SSWs to complete a Pathway Plan that will breakdown in more detail the young person's related allowance. See the separate policy for young people remaining with their previous foster carers under a Staying Put arrangement.

### 18. **NVQ / recognised training award**

For carers completing a recognised award since 2010 there is a one-off payment of £500. For carers who completed the award before 2010 they can receive either a one-off payment of £500 or an annual payment of £100, this will be made in March each year for carers who have been available throughout the year and who have had a placement for at least 46 weeks in the year (-see the criteria for paying the fee for an additional 8 weeks).

### 19. **Long Service**

A payment will be made in March each year for carers who have completed 3, 5 or 10 years of Fostering with Wandsworth.

3 years- £100

5 years- £200

10 years- £400

and who have been available for at least 46 weeks in the year.

### 20. **Recruitment of new carers**

From April 2017 a £1,000.00 one-off reward payment is be made to foster carers who successfully recruit another foster carer for Wandsworth Council. The payment is made once the applicant has been approved by the Agency Decision Maker.

### 21. **Receipts and Evidence of Expenditure.**

Foster Carers are required to keep documentary evidence of expenditure (see section 4). This is important especially if there are any concerns/ complaints made by children/ young person or parents – The breakdown of the allowance will have been discussed at the Placement Agreement Meeting and the SSW will regularly support and discuss the expenditure of the allowance with carers.

When a child is placed, the carers are required to complete a list of clothing, toys, and belongings that the child/young person arrives with. This list should be kept and added to; so, reflecting the purchases and items damaged/disposed of if too small/damaged etc. This will be checked by the SSW after the first week and then periodically reviewed, at least yearly. As a child leaves, the list of belongings and clothes should be given to the child's social worker. Carers are also expected to ensure that each child/young person has appropriate bags to pack up their belongings etc as a young person leaves. These will

need to be purchased from the allowance over the duration of the child/ young person's stay. No belongings should be passed on in plastic bags or bin liners.

## 22. **Equipment and Household Items**

It is expected that in discussion with their SSW the foster carer will be saving both for the larger child related expenditure and the replacement of the worn out/damaged items. The Supervising Social Worker will monitor this issue during their supervisory visits. The issue of damage and reparation will be covered in the Placement Agreement Meeting. Young people will be made aware of this issue and where necessary the involvement of the Police. Each carer is required to have both Contents/Household Insurance and comprehensive Car Insurance for any vehicle they intend to transport the child/young person in (as outlined in the Foster Carer Agreement.).

SSW's will check this documentation at each Annual Household Review and carers must advise the Department of any changes.

The Department can consider exceptional payments in certain circumstances if the foster carers have followed the agreed procedure (see receipts section 21 above), has taken due care and has documentary evidence.

## 23. **Keeping Money and Valuables Safe**

Foster carers are expected to keep their own valuable items and all money safe and secure (all paperwork on young people also needs to be locked away and kept confidential). SSW's can offer advice on these issues and will regularly review this. We cannot reimburse carers for money which is lost or stolen.

## 24. **Music**

Music lessons can be funded from the leisure component of the child's allowance or the opportunity to take music lessons can be discussed at the Personal Education Plan meeting. If agreement is given, funding through the Virtual School team will be confirmed.

## 25. **Computer**

Children looked after above the age of 11 years old are provided with laptops via the Virtual School team who will monitor and support the carers with the installation, and repairs. The Virtual School can make a discretionary decision on whether younger children would benefit from being provided with a laptop.

Carers are expected to pay for the costs of Internet access from the child's allowance.

## 26. **Child Absent from Placement**

### **a) Absence of a child from a Foster Placement (not respite):**

The child's fostering allowance will be paid automatically to the carers for any absence from the placement for up to seven days. This includes the young people being missing or staying with family/friends. After seven days, if a child is missing from placement, decisions about the placement will be subject to normal care planning processes. When the young person is staying with family/friends or on a school trip, the carer is required to

ensure the young person has sufficient money for food, travel, and pocket money etc. During this period, the foster carer remains available to take the young people back if the plans breakdown/change.

b) Hospitalisation: If a young person is in hospital over seven days, the allowance will continue to be paid fully for up to three weeks and thereafter at 50% until a decision is taken that might lead to a placement being terminated. This recognises the foster carer's costs in visiting and supporting the child.

Fostering Service

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