

PAYMENTS TO FOSTER CARERS

Key legislation, guidance & case law

Care Standards Act 2000
Children Acts 1989 & 2004
Children & Young Persons Act 2008
Local Authorities Social Services Act 1970
Equality Act 2010
Care Planning, Placement & Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 (“2010 Regulations”)
Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (“2011 Regulations”)
Children Act Guidance
National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services
Family & Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities
R (X) v Tower Hamlets LBC [2013] EWHC 480 (Admin); [2013] EWCA Civ 904

Applies to:

Foster Carers approved under reg. 27 of the 2011 Regulations;
Foster Carers temporarily approved under reg. 24 of the 2010 Regulations.

Commencement date: 8th June 2022

First scheduled review 1st April 2023

INTRODUCTION

1.1 This policy supersedes and replaces with effect from the above commencement date all previous policies on the provision of payments to persons approved by Bradford Council (“the Council”) as foster carers in accordance with reg. 27 of the 2011 Regulations, or temporarily approved under reg. 24 of the 2010 Regulations. It applies to both unrelated (“Mainstream”) and related (“Family or Friends”) foster carers and to both long-term and short-term placements. This policy does not apply to foster carers commissioned from Independent Fostering Agencies who will have their own foster carer policies and procedures in place.

1.2 This policy also provides internal guidance for Council officers and others as to payments to foster carers.

1.3 In formulating this policy the Council has had due regard to, and intends to continue to have due regard to, its public sector equality duties under the Equality Act 2010.

1.4 This policy will be reviewed by 1st April 2023. In the meantime, the Council intends to consult with foster carers and other interested parties in order to decide whether and if so how the policy should be modified to better suit the needs of those to whom it applies and/or is intended to benefit, having regard to all relevant matters including the performance of this policy; the availability of resources and the Council’s duties under the Children Acts. Further equality impact assessment will be undertaken based upon such consultation.

1.5 The Council invites feedback on the operation of this policy and any views or comments should be addressed either to the Supervising Social Worker (“SSW”) or John Heron Fostering Service Lead. All such feedback will be taken into account when the policy is reviewed.

PAYMENTS

2.1 This policy applies to three types of payment: “maintenance allowance”; “professional fee” and “additional allowance”. The maintenance allowance is graduated according to the age of the child and is based upon the DfE recommended weekly allowance. It is subject to periodic review in accordance with the National Minimum Fostering Allowance.

2.2 The professional fee (sometimes referred to as the “skills fee”) is a reward payment based upon a tiered professional development programme with provision for movement between tiers. The full fee is paid for the first child and an extra 50% is paid for each subsequent child.

2.3 The additional allowance is paid on a case-by-case basis.

2.4 All three categories of payment are available to all types of foster carers.

2.5 The current rates are as follows:

Maintenance Allowance

Age 0-4	Age 5-10	Age 11-15	Age 16-17
£138	£152	£173	£202

Professional Fees

Level	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children
Entry Level	£100.00	£150.00	£200.00
1	£144.16	£216.24	£288.32
2	£204.20	£306.30	£408.40
3	£290.72	£436.08	£581.44
4	£468.47	See 4.1-4.3 below	See 4.1-4.3 below

Additional Allowances

These payments include:

- Birthday, holiday and religious festival payments equal to 4 x the weekly fostering maintenance allowance per annum. The amount paid is dependent on the age of the child.
- Up to 4 weeks per annum skills payments for respite.
- Up to 12 weeks paid retainer set at the foster carers skills fee level once a child has left the fostering household. However, if no children are placed within the first 6 week period the retainer is reduced by 50%. If no child is placed within a further 6 week period the retainer payment is ceased.
- Exceptional travel expenses

- Discretionary payments, e.g. school uniform and initial clothing allowances, school trips etc.

COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

3.1 See Annex A. The framework sets out the key factors for determining tier level. Foster carers should speak with their SSW if they consider that they have other relevant skills or attributes not listed in the framework. Evidence of competency can also be drawn from foster carers' annual reviews and other feedback received. Progression through the framework is achieved by meeting the requirements of the new skill level.

3.2 Most foster carers will be approved at Entry Level. Some prospective foster carers may have significant experience of providing childcare or possess other transferable skills from other settings and have relevant qualifications. In these circumstances it may be possible for a new foster carer to be approved at a higher skills level provided they are able to provide evidence that they can meet the criteria for that level. Possible examples are a registered childminder or a teacher.

3.3 Foster carers who are seeking an initial approval at level 4 must be able to evidence considerable experience and skills within a related field. Examples might include foster carers transferring to the local authority from an IFA, or a Residential or Youth Justice Worker. In addition to this the prospective level 4 foster carer must attend an interview with the fostering service manager and residential fostering manager. Any agreement for a prospective/newly approved carer to start at a higher skills level is subject to approval by a Fostering Service Manager.

3.4 The Fostering Service will be responsible for ensuring that foster carers are given sufficient support and encouragement towards professional development through the provision of training opportunities commensurate with the skills level required. SSWs will also work with their foster carers to produce a personal development plan.

3.5 Foster carers can request that they are progressed to the next skills level at any point in the year and do not have to wait for the foster carers annual review. However, foster carers are required to have completed the Training Support and Development Standards ("TSDS") workbook within one year of initial approval (extended to 18 months in respect of Family and Friends foster carers) before progression and any other mandatory training courses relevant their current skills level.

3.6 Skills progression will be based upon self-assessment using the form at Annex 2. Completion of this form should be discussed with the SSW and the form must be signed and dated as each competency is completed. The SSW should also request testimonials from other professionals regarding the care given or training received. Testimonials can be provided by the Childs Social Worker, Independent Reviewing Officer, School or other foster carers. Feedback documents produced by these

professionals for the purpose of the foster carers annual review can be used for this purpose rather than duplicating work.

3.7 The Completed form should be returned to the SSW who will comment on the outcomes of any allegations or complaints against the foster carer in the last year. They will also note any compliments or commendations received by the foster carer and summarise the testimonials received. The SSW will then make their recommendations and give their reason for their recommendation and pass the assessment to the Team Manager for quality assurance. The Team Manager will in turn make a recommendation and pass the assessment to the Fostering Service Manager for the final decision. The Service Manager will record their decision and their reason for it on the assessment form. This will then be communicated to the SSW and Foster Carer Payments. The SSW will inform the foster carer. Should the Service Manager decide not to progress the foster carer to the next level the foster carer can make written representations within 28 days of the decision. The decision will then be reviewed by the Head of Service and a final decision made.

3.8 In a case where the Foster Care Service is considering stepping down a foster carer from a skill level to a lower level, the SSW should discuss this with the foster carer in the first instance. Where there is no improvement, the SSW should complete the payment for skills level self-assessment form with the foster carer for the level the foster carer is currently on. This should then be presented to the Team Manager for recommendation and passed to the Service Manager for decision.

3.9 Should the foster carer disagree with any decision they can make representations to the Foster Service within 28 days of the decision being communicated to them. The decision will then be reviewed by the Head of Service and a final decision made.

SPECIALIST FOSTER CARERS (Level 4)

4.1 Children and young people placed with Level 4 foster carers will generally have significant additional needs or present with challenging behaviours. All children placed alongside each other within the foster home will be carefully matched and risk assessed in order to safeguard all of the children. For this reason, level 4 foster carers would not usually have more than 2 children or young people placed together at any one time.

4.2 The weekly professional fee rate for level 4 foster carers is £468.47 plus £234.24 for each additional child.

4.3 Level 4 payments may extend to a range of specialist foster carers including Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) placements, Parent and Child parenting and family assessment placements, Mockingbird Hub Carers and foster carers for children and young people with complex needs who would otherwise be placed within therapeutic residential placements.



Signed

Philip Seguola
Assistant Director
Safeguarding and Review, Commissioning and Provider Services

Dated8th June 2022.....

ANNEX A COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

Entry Level	
General Requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence some experience of childcare (for example parenting or looking after other's children). • Demonstrate a good ability to listen to and communicate effectively with children and young people appropriate to their age, understanding, individual needs, ethnicity and culture. • Maintain confidentiality in relation to the child or young person in care. • Maintain a nurturing home environment that models family living and positively influences a child's or young person's aspirations. • Maintain written logs and records as required. • Ensure an appropriate standard and amount of clothing is provided to the child or young person.
Training and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate a commitment to self-development through training and support, including mentoring from an experienced carer. • Demonstrate a commitment to complete the Training, Support and Development Standards (TSD'S) within a year of being approved (18 months for Connected Persons Foster Carers). • Complete a Foster Care Personal Development Plan. • Demonstrate a commitment to attendance at all mandatory post approval training courses.
Promoting safe care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect children and young people from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation. • Maintain a safe care plan for each child or young person in foster care. • Set appropriate boundaries and demonstrate an ability to respond positively to children's behaviour without recourse to physical punishment. • Seek advice and guidance on boundaries or behaviours through the child's Social Worker or Supervising Social Worker as soon as you feel you need it. • Provide and maintain suitable accommodation for the number, needs and age of the child/ren or young people being cared for.
Promoting good physical health and emotional wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a good standard of care for children in a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment. • Knowledge of normal child development and an ability to listen to and communicate with children appropriate to their age and understanding. • Ensure the health and safety of children and young people within the home including completion of the Health and Safety Checklist. • Attend health and dental appointments with a child or young person in being cared for.
Promoting educational attainment and achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence a willingness and ability, wherever feasible, to transport the child to and from school. • Actively promote, support and encourage children and young people's engagement with education opportunities as set out in their Personal Education Plan (PEP).

Skill Level 1

<p>General Requirement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To demonstrate all the Entry Level requirements to a good standard. • Assist young people to develop independence skills and the knowledge necessary for successful adult living. • Demonstrate a commitment to ending care arrangements in a planned and agreed way. • Assist children and young people to move to other care arrangements when required and as part of a child's plan for example a return to birth family, to another foster home or onto adoption. • Assist with Life Story Work for the child or young person in your care. • Ensure the child receives the required amount of weekly pocket money and savings. • Attend and contribute to your Annual Review, self-assessment, and reflective learning opportunities. • Attend and contribute to Children in Care Reviews and other meetings as stipulated and agreed in the child's care plan. • Act as an advocate for the child or young person in care in consultation and collaboration with other professionals.
<p>Training and Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed Training, Support and Development Standards (TSD'S). • Evidence positive use of supervision and guidance received from the Supervising Social Worker and demonstrate an ability to reflect and learn from advice given. • Undertaken mandatory training as set out in the training handbook. • Commitment to Undertaking a minimum of 15 hours training per year (can include attendance at support groups which contain a learning opportunity). • Attend appropriate support group at a minimum of four times per annum.
<p>Promoting Safe Care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all safeguarding matters are reported immediately to the child's Social Worker or Emergency Duty Team (out of hours) and Supervising Social Worker. • Provide and maintain a safe, stimulating and stable environment that meets the individual needs of children taking into account their backgrounds and lived experiences.
<p>Good Physical Health and Emotional Wellbeing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure prompt reporting of any health or emotional well-being concerns and report any behaviours you are worried about to the child's Social Worker and the Supervising Social Worker. • Help and encourage children to be Healthy through providing a healthy diet, lifestyle and opportunities for regular exercise. • Encourage awareness and understanding of drug and alcohol issues and positively promote the development of good sexual health. • Promote and facilitate opportunities for good physical, emotional and social development for the child being cared for. • Assist children and young people in care to maintain a positive view of their family and support and facilitate contact as agreed in a placement plan. • Help children and young people cope with issues of separation and loss and assist them with coming to terms with previous experiences.

Promoting Educational Attainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and maintain daily routines for children and young people that promotes their attainment for example school attendance and assisting with homework. • Play an active role with education settings, for example attending school parents' evenings, contributing to or commenting on school reports and supporting school to home agreements. • Attend and contribute to PEP meetings and reviews. • Assist and encourage the development of children and young people's self-esteem and positive identity by supporting participation in social activities and leisure pursuits.
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Skill Level 2	
Progression Requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To demonstrate all the skill level 1 requirements to a good standard. • To be able and prepared to offer a home for children with more complex needs than that which would be expected at skills level 1. • Evidence the use of basic therapeutic parenting techniques under the guidance of the Supervising Social Worker and other relevant professionals. • Evidence development of skills required to meet the needs of more complex children and young people. • Ability to work with children and young people who might be functioning significantly below their chronological age. • Set appropriate boundaries of behaviour and persevere where progress is not immediately discernible. • Promote, support and where appropriate supervise contact/family time for the child and young person in care. • Actively contribute to work with birth parents or extended family where appropriate. • Contribute to professional assessments under the guidance of the Child's Social Worker and the Supervising Social Worker. • Maintain accurate written records and provide written reports on a child's progress as required. • Attend Court proceedings involving a child or young person in care where required.
Training and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To have completed the Training, Support and Development Standards and evidence examples of reflective learning. • To have completed core training (including Valuing Diversity, Safer Care, Safeguarding/Child Protection, First Aid, Recording and Reporting) or other courses as recommended by the Supervising Social Worker and demonstrate how learning has impacted on your fostering role. • Actively seek out training that will add to knowledge regarding chosen task/s. • An ability to effectively use support mechanisms to identify and develop knowledge and skills. • Evidence a good standard of learning in regard to offending behaviours and children at risk of exploitation.
Promoting Safe Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate an ability to keep children and young people safe from harm or abuse and to know how to seek help if their safety is threatened. • Teach levels of self-protection to children appropriate to their age, ability and understanding.
Promoting Good Physical Health and Emotional Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate responsiveness and affection through expressed warmth, emotional involvement and sensitivity to all children, including children who might have attachment difficulties. • An ability to understand and accept the differing levels of emotional responses from a child and work with them accordingly (e.g. running away, minor offending, bullying, bed wetting, attention seeking, irritating or withdrawn behaviour).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage and respond to children and young people who present with complex emotional needs. • Provide stable and predictable responses, routines and relationships. • Work with professionals to help children through emotional turmoil, which may be affecting them. • An ability to care for a child or young person needing regular medical attention (e.g. hospital visits, physiotherapy, speech therapy etc). Supervising special diets. • SUBJECT TO AGE RANGE: Teach the tasks of self-care to enable the young person to move towards independence. • SUBJECT TO AGE RANGE: Participate in the development and implementation of a clearly defined programme of work in order to prepare a young person to live independently. • SHORT BREAKS CARERS: An ability to care for a child with a physical disability, or a sensory impairment, which requires medical supervision. • SHORT BREAKS CARERS: An ability to monitor illness and administer specialised treatment, which is a delegated responsibility (e.g. supervising or giving insulin injections to a diabetic child).
Promoting Educational Attainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An ability to care for a child or young person with some degree of learning or educational/behavioural difficulties or a child with a Statement of Special Educational Needs. • An ability to undertake regular and specified remedial tasks relating to the child or young person's education. • An ability to liaise intensively with education professionals. • An ability to deal with some resistance to attending school or temporary exclusion, but not necessarily providing day care. • Undertake specifically agreed tasks where children's development is delayed or not consistent across age appropriate milestones.

Skill Level 3	
Progression Requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To demonstrate all the skill level 2 requirements to a very good standard. • Be prepared to act as a Mentor or Ambassador for the service (e.g. peer support to new carers, fostering training, fostering recruitment etc). • Co-ordinate and implement parts of the Care Plan as agreed. • To be able and prepared to offer a home for children with more complex needs than that which would be expected at skills level 2. • To demonstrate flexibility and a willingness (with the appropriate support) to consider offering foster placements to a range of different children including children with more complex needs or teenagers. • Contribute to professional assessments and care planning relating to children and young people in care. • Evidence a consistent ability to positively respond to challenging behaviours through the use of developed therapeutic parenting strategies and techniques resulting in stable care arrangements. • Understand extremes of behaviour linked to multiple rejections/placement breakdowns and seek support to work with this. • Evidence an ability to work cooperatively and supportively with birth families and relatives as considered appropriate. • Help children develop an understanding of themselves and of their past including culture, race, religion, language, disability and possible abuse.
Training and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To have undertaken all mandatory and additional training that further develops skills and builds on competency as a foster carer.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence examples where they have shared their learning and expertise with less experienced carers to achieve a positive outcome for a child or young person. • Produce an enhanced Personal Development Plan evidencing planning and action towards continual professional development. • Demonstrate a commitment in supervision to identify own training and development needs and how you have integrated this learning into the fostering role. • Actively seek out training and attend courses as per the Training Handbook and the Fostering Social Worker's recommendations. • Attend and contribute to Foster Carer Support Groups.
Promoting Safe Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care for child or young person who is presenting with risk taking behaviours, or has issues with self-control that may impact upon their health. • Understanding of the misuse of alcohol or other substances and associated issues e.g. working with birth parents who misuse substances. • Manage assessed risk in relation to sexually abusive behaviour. Contribute to planning for children at risk of sexual abuse through their own learned behaviour, or inherent vulnerability. Where there are extreme safety issues in relation to young people, carers are able to manage any identified risk appropriately and keep relevant professionals informed.
Promoting Good Physical Health and Emotional Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate an ability to provide sufficiently stable environments to enable the young people to develop and maintain appropriate secure attachments. • Be responsive and express warmth and sensitivity with children who seem to give little in return. Be clear that it is the child's behaviour, and not the child who is unacceptable. • Work with other professionals on individual programmes regarding issues around identity and self-esteem, where these are considerably affected by the child's experiences. • Work as part of the 'team around the child' in order to provide care for a child or young person which promotes emotional and mental health wellbeing. • Seek support and guidance in working with a child engaged in offending or antisocial behaviour where boundaries are resisted.
Promoting Educational Attainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the child's education plan at home and liaise closely with Education staff • Work with professionals to enable the child to achieve his/her potential where additional and extensive support and perseverance is needed. • Participate in a specified programme with a child who has been excluded from school.

Skill Level 4

Progression Requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To demonstrate all the skill level 3 requirements to an excellent standard. • To be able to demonstrate previous experience of caring for children with complex needs. • Act as a Mentor or Ambassador for the service. • Participate in service developments and activities representing the service such as attendance at committee meetings and meetings with other departments of the Councils. • Be able to provide specialist foster care in one or more key areas: for children and young people presenting with challenging behaviours, care for children with disabilities, care for children who have experienced significant disruption and breakdowns in their care arrangements, care arrangements linked with the Youth Justice system, emergency care for children displaying a high degree of challenge and distress (including Out of Hours) and care arrangements for complex young people who may otherwise be living in a residential setting contrary to their care plan.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One approved carer in the household must have a full-time commitment to fostering with no other paid work commitments outside the fostering service. • Evidence of ability to work closely and productively with a range of professionals from other relevant agencies involved with the care of the child, ie Childcare Social Workers, Education, Health, Clinical Psychologists, Therapists, Police etc • Evidence a consistent ability to positively respond to persistent challenging behaviours through the use of therapeutic parenting strategies and techniques resulting in stable care arrangements. • Evidence an ability to care for children with emotional well-being difficulties or emerging mental health diagnoses/conditions. • Evidence an ability to care for children who are excluded from school and work with the professional network to resolve any attendance issues. • Record and maintain accurate and detailed documentation to a high standard • Demonstrate tenacity and resilience in providing a stable home environment for a child who seems to reject this e.g. by running away, staying out etc.
Training and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete TSD fostering standards and portfolio of evidence during the first year of fostering if newly approved (with sufficient relevant experience). • Provide evidence of a skill set reflecting a high level of competence and fostering expertise through a portfolio of evidence. • Demonstrate a high level of knowledge and understanding of educational and child development. • Identify own training and development needs in collaboration with the Supervising Social Worker. • Produce an enhanced and detailed Personal Development Plan evidencing planning and action towards your continual professional development • Evidence a competent understanding regarding offending behaviours and children at risk of exploitation. • Attend Level 4 Support Groups.
Promoting Safe Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care for children who may have drug / alcohol addiction problems or who may demonstrate sexualized behaviours or who may be vulnerable to engage in risky behaviours or at risk of exploitation through CSE, gang membership or radicalisation. • Deal with the effects of extreme level of conflict between the child/young person and birth family members. • Work with children who connect back to birth families even when this is unhelpful or harmful. • Understand and work with children/young people who display extremely challenging behaviours and engage in risky and vulnerable behaviours. • Educate children into safer behaviour where this has put them at serious risk of abuse. Modify the child's environment to ensure safety with maximum freedom. • Carefully monitor and educate a child's contacts with others, both adults and children to ensure safe behaviour. Use digital use agreements with young people and educate on the risks of social media and using sites and apps appropriately. Manage risk whilst maximising participation and independence. • Work with others to minimise risk whilst accepting that some level of risk may always remain. • Help educate children who engage in risky behaviours and encourage access to professional help where necessary. • Follow agreed guidelines of behaviour in relation to keeping both adults and children safe.
Promoting Good Physical Health and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide care for a child who may present with challenging, difficult, and traumatic behaviours and is likely to be emotionally delayed. Ensure that the support that is provided is appropriate for the child's age and development, which is centred at the child's level of understanding. • Provide emotional nurturing at a developmentally appropriate level. This may be

Emotional Wellbeing	<p>different to the child's chronological age.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to manage a combination of extreme emotional needs and confusing, chaotic, and rejecting responses to adults who offer care for them. • Provide care for a child displaying the most serious levels of attachment difficulties or disorder; or a child who has a history of violent or offending behaviour; or who demonstrates a level of aggression and intimidation. • Promote, support and maintain Family Time (Contact) whilst being mindful of the need for boundaries. Provide a level of supervision and transport to and from Family Time as required, and where this is safe to do so. • Be consistent in providing a positive relationship, even in the face of rejection from the child.
Promoting Educational Attainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work closely with Education professionals and attend meetings regarding education to maximise potential where behaviour is extremely challenging. Provide consistent and proactive approach to behaviour management. • Be able to care for children who may not be accessing full time education whilst accepting support from relevant partners. • Support an individual learning plan where this is the only appropriate education resource for a child who cannot cope with school.