

MEDWAY COUNCIL

FOSTERING FEES AND ALLOWANCE POLICY

2025

DRAFT

Author	Andrada Pepenel
Date	01/04/2025
Policy review due date:	01/04/2026

Introduction

This document outlines the financial support framework provided to Medway Foster Carers by the Council's Fostering Service. As part of our service commitment, the payment structure has been reviewed. The primary goals are to increase the number of newly approved Foster Carers and to retain existing ones.

This policy details the allowances and fees that will be paid to carers, and how this money is expected to be used. Foster Carers receive these fees and allowances to meet the needs of the children in their care, and by way of payment for their support to our children. It also explains other payments made by Medway Council to their Foster Carers.

Fostering Allowances

Overview

In this section, you will find details of the new fostering fees. Payments to foster carers can only be made where Foster Carers have been formally recommended for approval via a Fostering Panel and approval ratified by the Agency Decision Maker, or under Regulation 24 (Care Planning Regulations) where the approval is for Kinship Care.

Foster carers are self employed and not employees of Medway council. Being a foster carer will always carry an element of risk and it is not incumbent on Medway Council to subsidise foster carers income. It is important for carers to consider for themselves how they will manage financially when they do not have children placed in their care.

Payments procedures

Fees and allowances are shown within this policy as a weekly amount for all placement types.

All payments are made to foster carers fortnightly by direct payment into bank accounts.

The fostering team and finance team should be informed by the child's Social Worker of changes in circumstances of children in care or care leavers that affect the

payments. For example, when children leave care, return to birth parents or there is a change in their legal status a Create/Amend Care Package episode must be completed on Mosaic.

Medway Council approved Carers (including Reg 24 temporary approvals, connected carers, approved foster carers, Supported Lodging providers and Staying and Put carers) will receive the following payments per week (payable every fortnight 2 weeks in arrears):

Age Bands	Maintenance (to meet the child's needs)	Reward (for the Foster Carer)	Total
0-4 years	£207	£213	£354
5-10 years	£227	£279	£506
11-15 years	£260	£279	£ 539
16+ years	£304	£279	£ 583

Determining a Child's Level of Need

A new Tiered system for determining the level of need for a child has been introduced.

Tier 1 = EXPECTED

Tier 2 = EXCEPTIONAL

There will be defined criteria for both Tiers and an assessment made regarding the appropriate Tier for the child upon receipt of the referral to the Fostering Team.

Tier 1 – payments made for children with the EXPECTED level of need for their age who are living within the care system. This is based on their lived experiences, the loss, trauma and separation they have endured and the anticipated impact these experiences have on their child development, emotional wellbeing and behaviours.

Carers will provide commitment to children / young people for a set period when there are competing plans or whilst a plan is developed. Children assessed as Tier 1 may present with challenging behaviours, and be experiencing some issues such as child

sexual exploitation, physical/verbal aggression, school refusal, offending behaviour etc.

Tier 2 – payments made for children that exceed the expected level of need, considered to be EXCEPTIONAL needs. Carers will provide commitment to specialised placements of children / young people with the most complex needs such as profound disability or step down from Residential care.

Tier 2 All rates shown are weekly rates.

	0-4 Years	5-10 Years	11-15 Years	16+ Years
Maintenance	£207	£227	£260	£304
Reward	£147	£279	£279	£279
Tier 2 Increase	£100	£100	£100	£100
TOTAL FEE	£454	£606	£639	£ 683

Breakdown of Maintenance

The table below is a guideline as to how maintenance should be broken down to meet a child's needs:

Ages	Shopping (food, Toiletries, cleaning products etc)	Clothing	Transport	Household	Personal – leisure and pocket money	Total
0-4	£52 / 25%	£41 / 20%	£52 / 25%	£21 / 10%	£41 / 20%	£207
5-10	£57/ 25%	£45/ 20%	£57/ 25%	£23/ 10%	£45/ 20%	£227
11-15	£65/ 25%	£52/ 20%	£65/ 25%	£26/ 10%	£52 / 20%	£260
16+	£76/ 25%	£61/ 20%	£76/ 25%	£30 / 10%	£61 / 20%	£304

Pocket Money

Overview

General arrangements must exist in all foster homes for the payment of pocket money to provide opportunity for children and young people to buy personal effects and

clothing at appropriate times. The arrangements should be set out in the placement plan for each individual child. All carers to ensure children and young people receive pocket money where it is appropriate for their ages and understanding.

Principles

Pocket money should be given to children and young people for their own use and not to pay for regular entertainment, clothes or personal toiletries. This is not to say they cannot spend their pocket money on these items if they choose to do so over and above what foster carers would normally provide from their foster care allowances.

There can be an expectation that some contribution to family living be given by the child or young person in exchange for their pocket money such as light household chores and top ups can be earned for additional chores like other families. This is particularly important in long term placements where the child will be living as a child of the family. This will need to be discussed and agreed with the foster carers' supervising social worker and the child's social worker.

A young person needs to develop budgeting skills as early as possible and the ability to live within the allowances paid to them when they become independent. This process should start in early adolescence so that false expectations of how far money will go are not misguided.

Supervising social worker will monitor pocket money given during supervision and foster carers are expected to record in their daily reports the amount of pocket money given each week. The foster carers should come to supervision prepared to evidence any pocket monies given.

Withholding pocket money is not an acceptable sanction for children and alternative acceptable sanctions should be used.

Recommended weekly amounts for pocket money

Age	Amount
Under 5 years	Occasional treats
5 years old	£1
6 years old	£1.50
7 years old	£2
8 years old	£2.50
9 years old	£3
10 years old	£3.50
11 years old	£5
12 years old	£5.50
13 years old	£7
14 years old	£8.50
15 years old	£10
16 years old	£12
17 years old	£15

There is not an expectation that children under the age of 5 years old will receive pocket money, but Foster Carers may choose to use this as a contribution towards other items or pay it into the child's saving account (see below).

Savings and Bank Accounts

Overview

All children and young people should be encouraged to open a personal bank account in order to save some of their pocket money or other money such as birthday and holiday gifts throughout the year.

Once a child has been in our care for at least a year we will contribute to their savings. This can be either by payments into the Child Trust Fund or for new children in our care (after 2011) via a junior ISA.

A child can get a Share Foundation Junior ISA if they are both:

- Under 18 years.
- Living in the UK.

From the date that the child meets the criteria, and initial opening balance payment will be made equal to 12 months savings, and from thereon in a monthly payment into the JISA will be made in the child's name. (For details of the amount see Appendix 1).

The council will contribute to the savings until the earliest of:

- a) the child or young person leaving the care of Medway Council,
- b) the child or young person no longer meeting the criteria set out within the scope of this policy or
- c) the young person turning 18.

The responsibility for setting up and making payments of JISA contributions to the Share Foundation, for each child who meets the criteria, is undertaken centrally by the Team Leader/ Placements and Finance Officer in the Children's Services Corporate Parenting Business Administration Team. The quarterly payment to the Share Foundation for each child will be recorded on Mosaic.

Festival Allowance

Foster Carers, connected carers and supported homes hosts will receive an annual payment for each child in placement by way of a Festival Allowance. The £200 contribution will be made as a stand-alone payment each December. For festivals celebrated at different times of the year, we request that Foster Carers put aside this payment until it's needed.

Birthday Allowance

Foster Carers will receive an annual payment for each child in placement by way of a Birthday Allowance. The £300 payment will be made one month before the child's birthday and should be used to purchase presents and towards costs of parties or celebrations. This will be discussed at the placement planning meeting.

If a child moves into the carers home close to their birthday and the usual bi-weekly payment date is too late to receive this prior to the child's birthday, an exception will be made to ensure a one-off emergency payment is made to the carers ahead of the child's birthday, this can be authorised by the Head of Service.

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) George/Adriana to amend and add a para

At the point of becoming looked after and being placed, both the statutory review and placement planning meeting should clarify matters relating to the child's DLA claim. If the DLA is being paid to a parent, the claim should be transferred to the foster carer who will become a 'Benefit Appointee'.

At the initial placement planning meeting the Supervising Social Worker will assist the foster carer to make a claim for Disability Living Allowance, if not previously completed. The DLA is intended to meet the additional cost of caring for a disabled child/young person.

DLA is paid in addition to the weekly maintenance allowance and should be used to meet the child/young person's additional needs accruing from their disability. Foster Carers are encouraged to apply for this state benefit for a disabled foster child. Foster Carers are required to keep a record detailing how the DLA has been spent (including receipts) which the child's Social Worker and fostering Supervising Social Worker may request to view at any time. Agreement for 'normal or regular' use of the DLA can be achieved through the delegated authority with the child's Social Worker and the fostering Supervising Social Worker. Anything outside of this would need to be discussed with the child's Social Worker. Any monies not spent should be saved for the child, although spending the full amount is recommended as it is important that the child's daily and changing needs are met using this funding. *Receipt of DLA is not defining criteria for Tier 2.

Carer's Allowance

If the child/young person receives middle or high rate DLA the carer may be eligible to claim Carer's Allowance. There is only one claim paid, regardless of how many eligible people they care for and only one person can claim even if more than one person is providing care.

Payments if Children and Young People are absent from home

In situations where a child or young person is absent from home the Maintenance Allowance and Reward Fee will continue to be paid for up to 7 days. Any decision to

continue allowances and fee payments will be taken following an assessment of need and will consider whether the child/young person is still being supported by the carer/s or if it is considered that the child will return to the placement. For example, whether a child or young person is in hospital and carer/s are visiting daily and providing ongoing practical, emotional, and financial support, or when the child/ young person is missing from care for long periods of time. It will be a collective responsibility between the carer, fostering social worker and child's social worker to ensure payments are stopped following 7 days away from home unless there is specific agreement, e.g. a retainer payment can be agreed by the specific Head of Service if this is deemed appropriate. Carers are reminded to be vigilant regarding their pay to avoid overpayments.

Payments during periods of carer illness

During periods of carer illness (definition – where children cannot be maintained in the carer household), carers may receive in any rolling 12-month period up to 3 continuous weeks Reward fee payments per household at a level equivalent to the fee rate being paid to them in the week immediately preceding the period of illness. The fostering service will note carer sickness on Mosaic in order that this can be tracked. The fostering social worker will notify when payments should stop.

Carers are reminded to be vigilant regarding their pay to avoid overpayments.

Foster Carer Training Expenses

Transport costs to attend prior approved carer training and professional development activities can be reimbursed via a mileage claim form (see Travel / Mileage above) or via production of bus / train ticket. Parking costs can also be reimbursed. Carers are encouraged to walk or cycle where this is feasible, being considerate to the environmental impact of their travel, this includes considering car sharing.

Travel expenses should be submitted by the foster carer to their Supervising Social Worker and must be supported by relevant car mileage journey record / travel tickets and attendance certificate copies if available.

Subject to prior approval, expenses incurred on other approved courses can be reimbursed when authorised in advance by Head of Service. Carers should send all

requests for expenses through their SSW who will verify and forward to the appropriate section for payment.

Key Documents for Children in Care

The team responsible for the child will pay for a passport and birth certificate for all children and young people in care (. These items are essential and assist with opening bank/savings accounts and provide identification verification, including when young people move to independence.

It is the responsibility of the child's Social Worker to obtain these key documents on the child's behalf when placed in care or as soon as possible thereafter.

Paid leave and agreed planned respite payments

Please note, paid leave rates should equal the maintenance & reward fee paid for paid leave to prevent carers receive different rates for the same number of hours.

Overview

All Medway Council approved Carers with children in short term and long-term placements will be entitled **to 16 days paid leave per annum**, for the period April-March. During the first year with Medway Council, if a newly approved carer is a carer that has transferred to Medway Council from an external agency the entitlement will be worked out on a pro rata basis.

If a carer leaves Medway Council they will have a pro-rata entitlement for the year in which they leave. If they have taken more that their pro-rata allowance during the financial year, overpayments will be deducted from their final payments.

Carers wishing to take a holiday or short break which will not involve the child/ren or young person who is placed with them, can continue to use their identified nominated carers or request that alternative carers are identified to provide care during the period of the planned holiday/break.

When booking paid leave, we encourage consideration for the child's needs and care plan. The paid leave will be organised by the Fostering Team after receiving a six weeks' notice of the intended leave being given to the SSW.

The primary Foster Carer will receive the Reward fee of the payment only during this period. The Maintenance fee and a second Reward fee will be paid to the Foster Carer providing the Respite. If the foster carer has exceeded their 16 days annual leave, the Reward Allowance will also be stopped – effectively taking unpaid leave. Foster carers will be able to request blocks of 12h or 24h paid leave at a time.

Foster carers not wishing to use their respite entitlement will receive payment in lieu of this at the end of each financial year. This payment could be used as a contribution towards costs of a family holiday for our child. Each day is calculated as 1/7 of the fee normally paid to the carer plus 1/7 of the weekly maintenance allowance for the child. The previous requirement to book paid leave in blocks no longer applies.

P&C Foster Carers will receive 50% of the assessed rate whilst using their entitlement or as payment at the end of the financial year.

Foster Carers who would prefer to use their Nominated Carers rather than paid leave, will receive their usual Maintenance and Reward fee during this period and would be eligible for the end of year outstanding paid leave payment.

Foster Carers who have not had a child in placement from April to March will not receive a payment in lieu of respite.

Respite agreed as part of the child's care plan or for placement stability would not be deducted from the Foster Carer's paid leave entitlement. In these incidences, the Foster Carer and the respite carer will receive both the Maintenance and Reward payment.

Day Care requirements for Foster Carers to attend Training or appointments for another child in their care will not be deducted from Foster Carers' annual leave

entitlement. However, it would be preferable for carers to exhaust their own support network before approaching the fostering service for support.

Payments

Respite provided for training purposes or placement need will be paid by the department at the following rates at a universal hourly rate of £11.94 per hour for 4 hours.

24-hour respite periods will be paid in line with the child's age. These payments have been calculated on a pro-rata basis and include both Maintenance and Reward fees.

Foster Carers providing day care or respite and facilitating school or contact journeys, above what would be considered a reasonable expectation (eg over 10 miles per day) will be able to claim mileage at the rate of 45p per mile. Agreement for this payment will need to be confirmed at the time day care or respite is arranged with the SSW.

Skills and Services Payment

Overview

Foster Carers for Medway Council Fostering are eligible for a Skills and Services annual payment in recognition of their valuable role and contributions to our children. This annual payment will replace the previous Competency Framework made to approved Foster Carers. A Foster Carer's development plan will be completed annually in conjunction with annual reviews and considered alongside the Foster Carers' length of service to the Fostering Team. This is for the fostering household, rather than per carer. The payment will be received on 1st April pro rata for the previous year.

If a Foster Carer has been subject of a substantiated allegation, action plan or Standards of Care during the 12-month period or have not completed their mandatory training or attended 2x support groups over the preceding year they will not receive the Skills and Services payment.

Payments

Foster Carers with the following Lengths of Service and the maximum Competency Framework will receive:

Length of Service	Skills and Services Payment Rate Per Annum
2-5 years	£500 (this will be recorded as Band 1 on the remittance advice)
6 – 14 years	£750 (this will be recorded as Band 2 on the remittance advice)
15+ years	£1000 (this will be recorded as Band 3 on the remittance advice)
Transfer-in Carers will be assessed in terms of their skills and length of approval within the transfer process and may be eligible for this at 12 months.	

Foster Carer Recognition of Service

Retirement after 10yrs + service: (where the carers are not transferring to another IFA or Local Authority)	£300 + Flowers and letter from the Assistant Director
---	---

Mileage

Costs incurred for transport and mileage per child are incorporated within the weekly Maintenance payment. Foster Carers can claim mileage. in excess of 200 miles per month at the rate of 45p per mile.

It is an expectation that carers support young people to travel to and from school, family time, health appointments, supporting a child / young person's agreed specific leisure activity / hobby. The mileage can be claimed on the appropriate monthly claim form, detailing the journey, reason and mileage incurred. Claim forms are forwarded to the foster carers' SSW and agreed by the Fostering Team Manager. Claims must be submitted within 3 months of the journey, any claims over four months will not be paid. Carers should discuss any issues or queries regarding mileage claims / journey reason with their SSW before submitting the claim form.

There is an expectation that young people aged **16-17 have a weekly travel pass** and that the use of public transport is encouraged for most journeys. All young people under the age of 18 who are in full-time education are entitled to a Travel Pass/ Buss Pass. For young people placed outside of the Medway area a bus pass relevant to his/her locality should be provided. In exceptional circumstances where an annual 'school only' pass is required, this will be funded by the social work team. In all circumstances the cost of the travel pass will be refunded to the carers through expenses claim.

Taxi fares will be reimbursed only in exceptional circumstances and need to be agreed prior to making the claim by a Head of Service. Disabled children may have transport provided to access school, play schemes etc. according to the same criteria as other disabled children who are not looked after.

Foster carers who provide transportation for children not currently placed with them are eligible to claim mileage expenses.

Foster carers who do not offer transport to the children and young people to school, family time sessions, health appointments or any other relevant appointments will have a standard amount of 25%/ of their maintenance per month in line with the payment profile above.

Medway Council reserves the right to consider charging parents/carers with PR for accommodating a child where it is assessed that the child should be in their care. To support the funding of a foster placement Medway Council may undertake a financial assessment of any parent that is requesting their child to accommodate a child under S20.

Emergency Settling-In Allowance

The emergency settling in allowance is provided for essential items and will be paid where children/young people are in new home for the first time with insufficient clothing for their needs. The settling in allowance will be paid only upon the child/young person becoming looked after for the first time or in exceptional circumstances where all clothing has been lost/destroyed/misplaced between placements.

A discretionary settling-in allowance of up to a maximum of £250 can be arranged, evidence of spending through receipts will be necessary. Agreement to the provision of the Emergency Settling-in Allowance must be given in advance. Foster carers should engage in discussions with their Supervising Social Worker (SSW) to determine the specifics of what is necessary. It is crucial to confirm that the child or young person will continue to be cared for, especially in cases of unplanned or emergency placements. During these initial moments, the focus is on acquiring essential items for the child.

School Clothing

Ongoing School Clothing / Uniform needs to be provided for within the weekly allowance. However, a consideration of extra funding will be made in such cases where the children have been recently accommodated in care. Foster Carers should discuss with their SSW who will then make an application to the Head of Service for a decision. (Primary School: up to £100, Secondary School: up to £250).

Retainer Fees where children are linked with carers

The fostering service recognises that some children/young people have very complex needs which may change over time. Exceptionally, there may be circumstances that require financial enhancement to fees or allowances. For example maintaining a child's home so they are the only child there, but the carer may have additional capacity consideration will be given to paying to supplement the carer for the additional space they have. This would be subject to regular review every 12 weeks and approval by the Head of Service. A fee of £230 will be paid to a Foster Carer in circumstances where the needs of a child in their care prevents the Foster Carer from accepting another child into the placement.

Fees and Payments to Out of Hours Emergency (EDT) Foster Carers

Foster Carers providing EDT placements receive a disruption fee rate of £50 per placement per day for up to 7 days. Placements made through the Emergency Duty Team outside of core office hours may include children and young people coming into care, children and young people detained under the 'Police and Criminal Evidence Act' provisions and Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children.

Fees and maintenance allowance payments for the foster carers' substantive placement/s continue unchanged.

Parent and Child Placements

Overview

Foster Carers will complete specific training and undergo an additional assessment to be approved for Parent and Child placements.

Parent and Child placements are offered to support the parent in developing their skills and capacity to meet their child's needs.

Payment

There will be an individual payment structure for Parent and Child placements, in which an All Inclusive Fee is paid to the Foster Carer.

Placement Type	Placement For:	Weekly Rate
Assessed (12-week guideline) P&C placement	One Child and One Parent	£1024
	One child and Two Parents	£1536
	Two children one parent	£1536
Pre-Birth Placement (6-week guideline)	Expectant Mother	£583
P&C where the mother is under 18yo	One child and One Parent	£1024 + maintenance and reward for the bracket the mother falls under eg if 16+ = 1024 + 583 = £1607

When living in a parent and child placement, the parent(s) are financially responsible for the child's needs. Savings for the child in the home will be made via the Share Foundation through Mosaic.

In cases where the parent(s) are under 18 years old or not entitled to claim state benefits, it will be the responsibility of the child's social work team to financially support

the parent(s) to prepare for the arrival of the baby and all other financial aspects of the child's needs. This will be discussed and agreed at the placement planning meeting.

In circumstances where the parent and child are both looked after, the Foster Carer will receive the P&C rate for the child and the 16+ Maintenance Rate of £240 to meet the needs of the parent, until the parent is eligible to claim state benefits.

In cases where a parent makes the decision to leave the carers home, the Foster Carer will continue to receive the P&C rate until the matter is brought before the Court or other appropriate decision-making forum. Due to limited number of parent and child placements, consideration will be given to moving the child with a foster carers specialist in looking after babies and that is trained in reunification or transition to permanent home.

Connected Carers

During the assessment stage, if a child is residing with a Temporary approved Connected Carer, the carer will receive the Maintenance rate of the fostering fee relating to the child's age. Upon completion of a positive assessment and approval as a Connected Carer, the Reward fee will be paid alongside the Maintenance fee, Birthday Allowance and Festival Allowance would be paid to the carer for the child from the point the child is placed, irrespective as to whether this is a temporary approval or an approval as a connected foster carer.

The Age Bands, Maintenance and Reward elements of the fostering fee structure that will apply to children living in Connected placements and will replicate those of approved foster carers and as follows:

Age Bands	Maintenance (to meet the child's needs)	Reward (for the Foster Carer)	Total
0-4 years	£207	£147	£354
5-10 years	£227	£279	£506
11-15 years	£260	£279	£ 539
16+ years	£304	£279	£ 583

Connected Carers will receive the Birthday and Festival allowances at the same rate as Foster Carers for each of the children in their care.

Connected Carers will not be eligible for the Skills and Services payment.

Children living in Connected placements will receive the same element of pocket money and savings as children living with Foster Carers.

Connected Carers are not entitled to paid respite/annual leave, unless this is an aspect of the child's care plan or for placement stability.

Should connected carers become foster carers for children other than those they are connected to them would be entitled to a one-off payment of £500 following a positive panel recommendation and upon approval by the Agency Decision Maker, they would also become eligible for the Skills in Service payment.

Children with Disabilities Fostering

Overview

Foster carers of children with disabilities will receive enhanced payments, Tier 3 due to the presenting needs of children with disabilities.

Further, for some children with disabilities who present with exceptional needs carers will receive further enhancement in the form of a Tier 4 payment.

Assessment, Decision and Review of Matching Needs

The Service Managers for Fostering and the children and young people with disability service will jointly assess the matching needs of a child upon referral and agree the criteria for the appropriate fostering fee. add

Payment

An individualised financial package for this unique type of fostering will consist of a 3-tiered system based on the child's level of need:

Tier 3 = Severe Needs – Children with disabilities

Tier 4 = Exceptional Needs - Children with disabilities who have exceptional needs.

Children whose needs are assessed as Moderate (rather than Severe or Exceptional) will meet criteria for Tier 2 of the generic fostering payment structure, as set out in the fostering allowances section. The rates for Disabilities Fostering will be paid as below:

Level of Need	Maintenance Payment per week	Reward Payment per week	Tier Increase	Total
Tier 3 – Severe Needs	£260	£600	£100	£960
Tier 4 – Exceptional Needs	£260	£700	£100	£1060

Children with Disabilities Respite

Foster Carers providing respite to children with disabilities in the form of hourly-blocks, overnight stays or longer periods will not be subject of contractual requirements or in receipt of a retainer fee.

Foster Carers approved for children with disabilities under this scheme will receive up to **24 days paid leave** per annum. Respite as part of the child's care plan will be in addition to this entitlement.

Foster Carers providing paid leave will be paid the pro-rotta rate of the child's maintenance and reward fees, based on the number of days / nights care.

Medway Supported Homes

Overview

Medway Supported Homes is a scheme which aims to offer safe and secure lodgings to vulnerable young people, aged between 16 and 25 years old, whilst they prepare for independent living. In most cases the young people will be those currently subject of a Care Order, who are in the process of leaving the care system, or who have resided in the care system as a child.

The Supported Homes Hosts will not be an approved Foster Carer but will possess qualities and attributes to offer a young person a home within a family environment and support them to develop skills to equip them for independent living.

Payment

Supported Homes Hosts providers will receive a weekly fee £330 for each young person in placement. This is a generic fee regardless of the young person's needs or circumstance. The provider is not financially responsible for any of the young person's needs. There will be an expectation.

Supported Homes hosts for Medway Council Fostering are eligible for a Skills and Services annual payment in recognition of their valuable role and contributions to our children.

Supported Homes Hosts will have an entitlement of 7 days paid leave.

Personal Development plan

Supported Homes hosts will be eligible for the Skills and Services payment. A development Plan will be completed annually in conjunction with annual reviews and considered alongside the supported homes providers' length of service to the Fostering Team.

The Personal Development Plan will need to be achieved to receive this payment annually. If a provider has been subject of a substantiated allegation, an action plan or Standards of Care concern during the 12-month period they will not receive the Skills and Services payment.

Staying Put

Overview

Staying Put refers to an arrangement to extend a placement for a young person transitioning to adulthood for them to continue to reside within a family and supported

environment. The intention is for the young person to remain with their former Foster Carers until they are prepared for independent living.

A Staying Put arrangement is set out in a young person's pathway plan or Looked After Child's review.

Payment

The Staying Put payment will be £200 per week. The Staying Put provider is not financially responsible for any of the young person's needs. This is a generic fee regardless of the young person's needs or circumstance. The staying put provider will receive other payments, as follows:

Weekly Fee Payable from Medway Council (if in education or training this will remain at fostering rate until end of academic year)	£200 standard rate
Housing Benefit Contribution Weekly Fee (One Bedroom Rate in Medway)	£155.34
Young Person's Contribution Weekly Fee Payable (Young people will be expected to contribute from their universal credit, £20 towards food and £7 for utilities.)	£27 (if feasible)
Total Weekly Fee	£382.34

If the young person continues their full-time education or attends university while remaining in the foster home, the foster carers will receive a fostering fee that equals

the maintenance and reward element of 16+ until the end of Term after they finish university.

Should a young person move away to attend university, but their home and primary non-term time address remain with their foster/staying put carers, a retention payment of 50% the usual fee would apply increasing to the usual fostering fee when they young person returns home to stay. There will be an expectation that foster carers will support young people with Transport to and from university, moving and storing their belongings between changes in accommodation at the end of each year and ensuring they are supported practically and emotionally whilst away from home.

Forever home – adoption reward element

Foster carers who support with a child's transition for adoption, will receive an adoption transition payment of £50 per week for up to 4 weeks during the transition period. This is to be agreed in advance at the introduction planning meeting and will not be paid retrospectively.

Payments during allegations / Standards of Care

Foster Carers will continue to receive the Maintenance and Reward elements of the fostering fees whilst allegations or standard of care concerns are being investigated up until such time when a formal conclusion has been made. All allowances will follow the child(ren) should a decision be made to remove the child(ren) from the foster placement. At this point the carer under investigation would not receive any payment. Payment of fees will continue, for 16 weeks initially, if a child is withdrawn from placement because of an allegation against a carer. Fee Payments may be suspended immediately by the Service Manager/ Head of Service where there is clear supported evidence of and/or carer admission of serious malpractice. All payments during the investigation of allegations are subject to full co-operation of the carer in the investigation. Failure to co-operate may result in the withdrawal of all payments. In such circumstances, the Head of Service should be asked to make the decision, based on information provided by the Fostering Team Manager and Fostering Service manager. Should an investigation continue beyond 16 weeks, the Head of Service will decide on-going future payments.

Recommendations to terminate a carer's registration are considered by the Fostering Panel and ratified by the Agency Decision Maker.

Peer Mentors

Peer Mentors are experienced Foster Carers who have been approved for a minimum of 3 years, and who have undertaken training to become a Peer Mentor. Their role is to support newly approved Foster Carers and Foster Carers subject of allegations or standard of care concerns.

Peer mentors provide 6 sessions (each session is a maximum 1h) to the Foster Carer, connected carers and Supported Homes providers in need. The plan of which is agreed at the time of matching and allocation.

For newly approved carers there will be one additional pre-Panel session.

Peer mentors will be paid £15 per hour for supporting newly approved carers.

Peer mentors will be paid £15 per hour for supporting Foster Carers during allegations and standards of care.

There will be no inflation increase in the peer mentoring rate until such time as other hourly fees are in line.

Any additional sessions required will be at the agreement of the Team Manager.

Fostering ambassadors/ Supporting the Service

Fostering Champions will support with the recruitment of prospective Foster Carers. They will be appointed through a different process to the Peer Mentors. Fostering Champions will support the Recruitment Team at Open Events, sharing their experiences of applying to the service and of their assessment process, and be guest speakers at the Skills to Foster Course providing first-hand experiences of being a Foster Carer. Fostering Champions will also support the Team during the enquiry stage by attending initial home visits or undertaking these separately to assist prospective applicants to make informed decisions about choosing Medway to embark on their fostering journey.

Fostering Champions will be paid £11.94 hourly rate

Hospitalisation

Foster Carers will receive the full maintenance and reward elements of the fostering fee if a child or young person is hospitalised, with the expectation that the Foster Carer supports the child, as any parent would, during hospital admissions. If the child remains in hospital after 7 days, decisions about the placement will be subject to normal care planning processes.

Payments during periods of carer illness

During periods of carer illness (definition – where children cannot be maintained in the carer household), carers may receive in any one rolling year up to 3 continuous weeks fee payments per household at a level equivalent to the fee rate being paid to them in the week immediately preceding the period of illness. Should carers remain unable to resume care of the children a retainer fee of 50% the usual carers pay would be provided subject to Head of Service Approval. The fostering team reserve the right to request evidence of the carer being unfit to resume their caring role.

Overpayments

The Department will make every effort to ensure overpayments of fees or allowances do not occur. In cases where Foster Carers are overpaid, deductions will be made from the following payment due or any future payments. If the child is no longer in placement at the time the overpayment is discovered, the Foster Carer will need to pay back the money in full.

It is the responsibility of the Foster Carer to inform the department of any payments made to them that they are not entitled to receive promptly.

Refer a Friend Scheme

The Refer a Friend Scheme is available for approved Foster Carers to support with the recruitment of prospective applicants to the Fostering Team. A payment of £50 will be made to Foster Carers once the 'Friend' has been referred to become a Medway foster carer and a further payment of £450 once approved at fostering panel/ADM.

Council Tax Contribution

Medway Council Fostering will be offering all Medway Council approved Foster Carers a contribution towards their annual Council Tax payments. This figure is based on the average Council Tax cost for Medway households. An annual payment of £600 of the annual council tax bill. The payment will be made following Foster Carers' first year of approval and every subsequent year, following their annual review. This payment will not be dependent upon a child being in placement but will require the Foster Carer to be actively available for future placements. The payment will be made to the primary carer in November of each year.

This payment is not dependent on your residence in Medway; all Medway Council approved, and active Foster Carers will receive this. Please note that foster carers who have been on hold for more than 6 months will not receive this payment. The contribution will be made by Medway Council directly to Foster Carers, thus meaning there will be no involvement from the Local Authority in which you are resident if this is outside of Medway.

Damages and Repairs

Carers understand the children cared for by Medway Council are likely to have suffered a range of traumatic events in their lives. This can at times leave them with difficulties in expressing their feelings. Should carers experience damages to their homes, Medway Council may pay the excess on carers home insurance up to a value of £300. Repairs up to this value may be considered as an alternative.

Implementing this document

This document may not cover all possible situations. Service manager and Head of Service are empowered to interpret and consider exceptional individual circumstances on a case-by-case basis, subject to the guiding principles on which the funding of foster care provision is based.

Exceptional decisions should always be supported with the written authority of the Head of Service, subject to review on an agreed date and recorded as an exceptional decision for the purposes of monitoring the effective application of this document.

