



Medway Council Fostering

Fostering Fees and Allowances Policy 2021/2022



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Introduction

This document sets out the framework of financial support Foster Carers receive from Medway Council's Fostering Service. A new payment structure has been agreed as part of a whole-service review to increase the number of newly approved Foster Carers and to retain existing Foster Carers.

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 in order 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. An all-Inclusive fee will no longer feature in the payment structure; there will be a defined Maintenance fee and separate Reward fee which will be paid to all carers, based on a child's age and needs.

Payments

Medway Council approved Foster Carers will receive the following payments per week (payable every fortnight in arrears):

Age Bands	Maintenance (to meet the child's needs)	Reward (for the Foster Carer)	Total
0-4 years	£160	£120	£280
5-10 years	£180	£170	£350
11-15 years	£200	£230	£430
16+ years	£240	£230	£470

The 2019/2020 rates and age bands were as follows, with the proposed changes in column three:

Age Band	All-inclusive payment	Proposed changes Per Week
0 - 4	£250	£30 increase
5 - 8	£280	£70 increase
9 - 15	£400	*see below
16+	£430	£40 increase

*The bands for children aged 5-8 and 9-15 years have been changed under the new payment structure. We believe an age band of 9-15 years is too broad as the needs of a 9-year-old are very different to those of a 15-year-old. Having an age band of 5-10 years is categorised by the primary age, with the expected needs of a child being more stable compared to the secondary age.

We have recognised that as children prepare to enter secondary age, their needs become greater and the financial demands increase. Therefore, establishing age bands to mirror these developmental milestones and the financial impacts, will support the needs of our children more consistently.

For children aged 9 and 10 years, this does mean a decrease of £50 per week, however, when they reach 11 years this will be an increase of £30 per week compared to the current structure.

For carers currently matched with children aged 9 and 10 years, a 12-month protected transition period will be in place, meaning payment at the current rate will be made for this duration.

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 of time 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.

Matching Fee

Carers matched with children who are assessed as being Tier 2 will receive an additional payment (known as a Matching Fee) of £100 per week per child. This payment is a Reward payment and is solely for the carer.

Tier 1 and Tier 2 Payments

Age Bands	Maintenance (to meet the child's needs)	Reward (for the Foster Carer)	Tier 1 Total	Tier 2 Total (Including Matching Fee)
0-4 years	£160	£120	£280	£380
5-10 years	£180	£170	£350	£450
11-15 years	£200	£230	£430	£530
16+ years	£240	£230	£470	£570

Assessment, Decision and Review of Matching Needs

The Matching process will commence upon receipt of referral.

The Group Manager for Fostering and the Group Manager for Children in Care will form a Matching Panel. These Panel's will be held 4-weekly to assess the needs of the child and to decide which threshold criteria has been reached. It is likely that most children will meet the criteria for Tier 1.

In the case of emergency placements, during business hours, the Group Manager for Fostering (or an agreed Manager in her absence) will make a time-limited decision regarding threshold criteria and the case will be presented to the next available Matching Panel for a full assessment and the decision to be ratified.

In the case of emergency placements, during non-business hours, Tier assessments will not be undertaken. The matter will be referred to the Group Manager for Fostering to consider on the next available business day, where the process of time-limited decision making and presentation to the next available Matching Panel will be followed.

A review of the child's needs in relation to Tier 1 and Tier 2 criteria can be requested by the child's Foster Carer, Child Social Worker (CSW) or the Supervising Social Worker (SSW). Evidence pertaining to the request would need to be presented to the Matching Panel by the CSW and SSW.

In cases whereby a Foster Carer has been approached about a possible Match but we are awaiting further details or a decision from Court, thus potentially preventing Foster Carers being available for another child to be placed in their care, a retainer fee of £50 per week will be considered after a period of 2-weeks and reviewed accordingly if delays in the placement being agreed are evident.

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, pocket money and savings	Total
0-4	£40 / 25%	£32 / 20%	£40 / 25%	£16 / 10%	£32 / 20%	£160
5-10	£45 / 25%	£36 / 20%	£45 / 25%	£18 / 10%	£36 / 20%	£180
11-15	£50 / 25%	£40 / 20%	£50 / 25%	£20 / 10%	£40 / 20%	£200
16+	£60 / 25%	£48 / 20%	£60 / 25%	£24 / 10%	£48 / 20%	£240

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.

Principles

- The provision of pocket money helps children understand its value, costs for treats, clothes, activities, and helps them to develop budgeting skills necessary for the future.
- There is an expectation that an element of the maintenance payment should be used as pocket money for the child or young person. It is expected that the child or young person will be aware of how much they receive and when this will be paid.
- We have provided guidance as to the minimum weekly amount based on a child's age, but understand that circumstances in every home are different and we would want this to be compatible with Foster Carer's birth children.
- The amount of pocket money should be agreed at the placement planning meeting with the child's Social Worker and the fostering Supervising Social Worker.
- Younger children should be supervised when spending their pocket money, but older children should be encouraged to be more independent and responsible with their money.
- If there are concerns regarding the way in which the child is spending their pocket, these need to be discussed with the child and the child's Social Worker. If there is a serious risk posed to the child, the arrangements for providing money may have to be restricted or supervised spending arrangements put in place. This should always be discussed and agreed with the child's Social Worker.
- Deductions from pocket money should not be made for fines or sanctions. Exceptions of reparation for malicious damage or to pay fines by the Court will need to be agreed by the child's Social Worker, but no more than two thirds of the pocket money should be deducted in any week.

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. Children should not have access to a saving account, and Foster Carers will need to support children to build on their savings. A bank or savings account should be set up and managed by Foster Carers. Proof of the child's identity (passport or birth certificate, available from the child's Social Worker) and confirmation of the child's current address will be required.

A record of the amount saved and account details should be documented in the Foster Carer logs. A foster child's saving should never be paid into a Foster Carer's own bank account.

Minimum weekly payments for Savings

Age	Savings - Weekly Amount
Under 5 years	£5.00
5 years	£5.00
6 years	£5.00
7 years	£5.00
8 years	£5.00
9 years	£5.00
10 years	£5.00
11 years	£10.00
12 years	£10.00
13 years	£10.00
14 years	£10.00
15 years	£10.00
16 years	£10.00
17 years	£10.00

Savings for the child should commence from the first day of placement. If a child does not have a bank account, Foster Carers will be expected to put aside the minimum weekly amount until they are able to deposit it into the child's account.

*NB There is consideration for Savings to be taken at source and to be held by the Local Authority in the future.

Festival Allowance

Foster Carers will receive an annual payment for each child in placement by way of a Festival Allowance, such as Christmas. 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.

Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

Foster Carers are encouraged to apply for this state benefit for a disabled foster child. It is payable to meet the additional needs arising from the child's disability. The rate of the DLA will not be deducted from the Fostering Allowances paid by Medway Council for children under the age of 18.

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.

Respite

Overview

There was no 'holiday entitlement' in the form of Respite under Medway Council Fostering's previous payment structure. The introduction of this Respite will delete all current Loyalty payments.

These payments should be seen as a reward of the Foster Carer's commitment to provide stable and consistent care to our children. All Medway Council approved Foster Carers with children in short-term and long-term placements will be entitled to 14 days paid respite per child per annum, for the

period April-March. We will pro-rotate your entitlement based on your approval date during your first year as Foster Carers.

When booking respite, we encourage consideration for the child's needs and care plan.

The respite will be organised by the Fostering Team. The primary Foster Carer will receive the Reward fee of the payment during this period. The Maintenance fee and a second Reward fee will be paid to the Foster Carer providing the Respite.

If a child has been assessed as Tier 2, the matching element will also be paid to both carers.

Foster carers not wishing to use their respite entitlement, will receive payment in lieu of this at the end of each financial year. These payments will be considered in 7-day blocks (for example, a carer who chooses to use 7 days respite during the year would receive payment for the remaining 7 days respite that has not been taken). This payment could be used as a contribution towards costs of a family holiday for our child.

Payments made to Foster Carers who have not used their respite entitlement will be based on the Reward fee of the child(ren) in your care, the child(ren) who shared a holiday with the fostering family, or the last child(ren) in your care.

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 respite, will receive their usual Maintenance and Reward fee during this period and would be eligible for the respite payment at the end of the financial year.

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 entitlement. In these incidences, the Foster Carer and the respite carer will receive both the Maintenance and Reward payment.

In addition to the 14-day respite, Foster Carers will receive 48 hours 'Fostering Family Focus Respite' per child per year. These will be periods of up to 4 hours each (on 12 separate occasions) where primary Foster Carers can request day care for each child in their care in order for the Foster Carer to attend personal appointments.

Day Care requirements in order for Foster Carers to attend Training or appointments for another child in their care will not be deducted from Foster Carers' 14-day entitlement or Fostering Family Focus Respite.

Payments

Respite provided for training purposes or placement need will be paid by the department at the following rates:

Period of Day Care	Rate Payable
Up to 4 Hours	£30
Up to 8 Hours	£50

Family Focus Respite	£30
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Overnight respite will be calculated in 12-hour or 24-hour periods, in line with the child's age. These payments have been calculated on a pro-rata basis and include both Maintenance and Reward fees.

Age of the Child	Respite Rate Per 24 Hours
0-4 years	£40
5-10 years	£50
11-15 years	£61
16+	£67
Parent and Child Respite	£120

For example: Foster Carers providing respite to a child from 3pm on Friday until 6pm on Sunday, would be paid 2 x the 24-hour rate for the age of the child plus half of this rate as the care they've provided has entered another 12-hour period.

Foster Carers providing day care or respite and facilitating school or contact journeys, above what would be considered a reasonable expectation 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 Training reward made to approved Foster Carers.

Competency Framework

A Competency Framework 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 maximum Competency Framework requirements will need to be achieved in order to receive this payment annually. If a Foster Carer has been subject of an action plan or Standards of Care during the 12-month period 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 your remittance advice)
6 – 14 years	£750 (this will be recorded as Band 2 on your remittance advice)
15+ years	£1000 (We will need to discuss with Tracy the implementation of another band)
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.	

The Competency Framework has been designed to improve and maintain the standards of care received by our children.

Mileage

Costs incurred for transport and mileage per child are incorporated within the weekly Maintenance payment. Foster Carers can claim mileage in excess of 700 miles per month at the rate of 45p per mile.

Settling-In Allowance

A discretionary settling-in allowance of up to £250 can be agreed at the time of Matching to ensure (i) the Foster Carer has the correct equipment to meet the child's needs or (ii) when the expected level of need for the child is above those expected of a Foster Carer to meet.

Bed-Blocking Fee

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. This will be discussed and agreed with the fostering Supervising Social Worker and the Fostering Group Manager at the time of the circumstances arising.

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)	One Child and One Parent	£840
	One child and Two Parents	£950
Supported P&C Placement	One Child and One Parent	£650
	One Child and Two Parents	£700
Pre-Birth Placement (6-week guideline)	Expectant Mother	£470 (Maintenance and Reward)

When living in a parent and child placement, the parent(s) are financially responsible for the child's needs. The Foster Carer will be expected to meet the weekly Savings element for the child.

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 Matching Panel and further 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 in order 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 placement, 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.

When a decision has been made for a child to remain with the Foster Carer; changing the placement from a P&C to a generic placement, and preventing the carer from supporting another P&C, a bed blocking fee will be paid at the rate of £230 per week.

Connected Carers

During the assessment stage, if a child is residing with a 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.

The Age Bands, Maintenance and Reward elements of the fostering fee structure that will apply to children living in Connected placements are:

Age Bands	Maintenance	Reward	Tier 1 Total	Tier 2 Total (Including Matching Fee)
0-4 years	£160	£120	£280	£380
5-10 years	£180	£170	£350	£450
11-15 years	£200	£230	£430	£530
16+ years	£240	£230	£470	£570

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, unless this is an aspect of the child's care plan or for placement stability.

Children with Disabilities Fostering

Overview

The 0-25 Team and the Fostering Team are working together to establish a specialised fostering package for Children with Disabilities. Children open to the 0-25 Team with a need for Respite or a foster placement will be matched with assessed, trained and approved Foster Carers specifically for this fostering specialism.

Assessment, Decision and Review of Matching Needs

The Group Managers for Fostering and the 0-25 teams will jointly assess the matching needs of a child upon referral, and agree the criteria for the appropriate fostering fee.

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

Tier 4 = Exceptional Needs

*Defined criteria will be set out

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 3 – Severe Needs	£240	£600
Tier 4 – Exceptional Needs	£240	£700

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 21 days respite per annum. Respite as part of the child’s care plan will be in addition to this entitlement.

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

Supported Lodgings

Overview

Supported Lodgings 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 Lodgings provider 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 Lodgings providers will receive a weekly fee of £230 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. The young person will be required to make a weekly £10 contribution to the provider for costs of utilities.

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

Competency Framework

A Competency Framework will be completed annually in conjunction with annual reviews and considered alongside the supported lodgings providers’ length of service to the Fostering Team.

The maximum Competency Framework requirements will need to be achieved in order to receive this payment annually. If a provider has been subject of 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 in order 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.

*NB – the Staying Put Policy is in the process of being updated.

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.

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 to the Foster Carer 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 session for supporting newly approved carers.

Peer mentors will be paid £20 per session for supporting Foster Carers during allegations and standards of care.

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

Fostering Champions / 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 £15 for each session of support, and £50 for one full day's attendance at the Skills to Foster Course.

Missing from Placement

A Foster Carer will continue to receive the maintenance and reward fees of the fostering fee if a child is missing from placement. If after 7 days the child is still missing, decisions about the placement will be subject to normal care planning processes, which may result in termination of the placement.

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.

Overpayments

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.

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. Payments will be made to Foster Carers at different stages of the applicant's fostering journey:

£200 upon completion of Stage 1 (currently this is paid at £100)

£300 upon approval (currently this is paid at £200)

£300 upon newly approved carer's first placement (currently this is paid at £200)

Concessions

In addition to the Fees and Allowances, Medway Council Fostering are offering different concessions to approved Foster Carers.

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 £310 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 Foster Carers will receive this. 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.

Adult Education Discount

A 20% discount will be available for each member of the fostering family (resident within the fostering household) on all Medway Council Adult Education courses. This will be available 2-years post approval, and applied to one chosen course per family member throughout the duration of the Foster Carers' approval.

Other concessions will be implemented in seasonal approaches.