

## The Fostering Service

### SCHEDULE OF ALLOWANCES and FEES 2024 - 2025

**INTRODUCTION:** The Schedule of Allowances sets out the Council's offer to Foster Carers regarding fees and allowances.

- Suffolk County Council have adopted the national government (DfE) minimum rates for fostering allowances.
- The foster care payment structure follows a 5-tiered Scheme to which **all** carers are aligned, depending on their placement offer. All those carers aligned to Level 2 and above, who meet the required competencies and criteria, receive an additional fee payment that varies according to the requirements at that level.
- The fee element of the fostering payment rises in line with increases in placement offer i.e. older children, or to meet greater complexity of the child's needs and manage more extreme behaviour.
- The weekly fostering allowance and, where applicable, the fee element is paid from the first day of placement until the last day of placement. This allowance is paid to all foster carers regardless of their approval status e.g. temporary approval of foster carers (Kinship/Connected Persons).
- The allowances are expected to cover the cost of maintaining a child or young person in foster care (please see **SCC's "The Foster Carer Manual" June 2017** which outlines the various headings).

#### 1 **Income Tax**

1.1 Most foster carers are exempt from income tax, as the level of fostering allowances and fees would not put them over the qualifying threshold. However, all carers are strongly advised to register as self-employed and to read the information regarding tax and benefits on the following website:

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/individuals/foster-carers.htm>

1.2 Additional information concerning financial inclusion matters is contained in "the Foster Carer Manual", from Fostering Network and SFCA.

From 6<sup>th</sup> April 2023 the Tax thresholds changed. The qualifying amounts have changed to:

- The fixed amount changed to £18,140, plus
  - Weekly amounts for each cared-for child or adult:

**NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED**

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- £375 for each child under 11 years of age
- £450 for each child 11 years of age or older
- £450 for each adult

The rates will then increase each year from 2024/25 tax year onwards. The 2023-24 tax information above should be used for foster carer tax returns due by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025.

If you wish to read more information the gov webpage can be found [here](#)  
It increases the amount our carers can earn before paying tax.

### 2 Short term savings and ISA savings:

This has been reviewed following consultations with foster carers, children and young people. The updated Savings Policy can be viewed on our [website](#).

### 3 **FOSTERING ALLOWANCES and FEES**

Tiered Scheme Level	Allowance	Fee £	TOTAL WEEKLY PAYMENT £	*PLUS Additional Payment Per Year for holidays etc.
Standard Level One 0 – 1	165	0	<b>165</b>	660
Standard Level One 2 – 3	170	0	<b>170</b>	680
Standard Level One 4 – 10	187	0	<b>187</b>	748
Standard Level One 11 – 15	213	0	<b>213</b>	852
Standard Level One 16 – 17	249	0	<b>249</b>	996
Intermediate Level Two 0 – 1	165	81	<b>246</b>	660
Intermediate Level Two 2 – 3	170	83	<b>253</b>	680
Intermediate Level Two 4 – 10	187	32	<b>219</b>	748
Intermediate Level Two 11 – 15	213	53	<b>266</b>	852
Intermediate Level Two 16 – 17	249	73	<b>322</b>	996
advanced Level Three 0 – 1	165	164	<b>329</b>	660
Advanced Level Three 2 – 3	170	172	<b>342</b>	680
Advanced Level Three 4 – 10	187	192	<b>379</b>	748
Advanced Level Three 11 – 15	213	228	<b>441</b>	852
Advanced Level Three 16 – 17	249	256	<b>505</b>	996
Foster Plus Level Four 7 – 10	187	308	<b>495</b>	748
Foster Plus Level Four 11 – 15	213	344	<b>557</b>	852
Foster Plus Level Four 16 – 17	249	374	<b>623</b>	996
Specialist Level Five 7 – 10	187	424	<b>611</b>	748
Specialist Level Five 11 – 15	213	459	<b>672</b>	852
Specialist Level Five 16 – 17	249	488	<b>737</b>	996

### \*Additional Payments

In addition to the weekly allowance, one week's additional allowance will be payable each year to provide the child with birthday presents, one week's allowance for a cultural festival (e.g. Christmas) and gifts, plus you will also receive the equivalent of 2 week's allowance over the summer holidays.

All Suffolk Foster Carers ALSO receive:

- Mileage at 45p per mile for family time/meetings and training
- Loan of essential equipment and computers
- Insurance
- Up to 21 nights paid Short Break, per placement
- Membership of Fostering Network

They ALSO benefit from: Regular placements, Choice of placements, fee 'progression' based upon increased placement offer.

For full details of the Suffolk fees and allowances scheme please visit:

<https://fosterandadopt.suffolk.gov.uk/>

### 3.1 **ADDITIONAL ALLOWANCES**

#### 3.2 **Holiday Allowance**

3.2.1 This is paid annually in the 1<sup>st</sup> week in July and is two week's fostering allowance for the age group of the child (the foster carer's fee element is not paid)

3.2.2 This holiday allowance together with the regular fostering allowance is Suffolk County Council's full contribution to the cost of holidays and recreational activities during the summer holiday period. If the child does not accompany the carer on the "family holiday" the allowance should be used to fund an alternative holiday or other recreational activities for the child during the summer holiday period.

3.2.3 If a child leaves a placement during the summer school holiday, the holiday allowance may need to be recovered to support a holiday in another foster placement, the amount recovered will be proportionate to the length of time the child has remained during the summer break. For example, if the child leaves at the end of July it is likely that the whole amount will be recovered. If they leave at the end of August, it is likely that no money would be recovered. The Supervising Social Worker will need clear evidence that the allowance has been spent on providing the child with a holiday or relevant activities if a carer

wishes to retain any of the allowance. This will be discussed with and agreed by the Practice Manager.

- 3.2.4 If a foster carer has booked a child on a holiday or activities and the placement subsequently ends, the carer should cancel the holiday or relevant activities. If this cannot be cancelled then, on production of receipts for the booked holiday, the Holiday allowance will not be recovered from the carer. Similarly, if the cancellation of a booked holiday has incurred non-refundable deposits, upon production of receipts, these costs will be met by Suffolk County Council and not reclaimed from the carer.
- 3.2.5 Foster carers who have a child placed with them after the holiday allowance has been paid in July, but before the 26<sup>th</sup> August and who was not previously placed with foster carers, will be entitled to the full allowance for the holiday period.

### **3.3 Birthday and Festival Allowance**

- 3.3.1 The Birthday allowance will be paid between 7 to 10 days in advance of the child's birthday and will be equivalent to one week's fostering allowance for the age group of the child.
- 3.3.2 The Festival allowance will be paid at the beginning of December or, for other Religious Observances e.g. Eid, it will be paid in good time before the relevant event. These payments are equivalent to one and a half week's fostering allowance for the age group of the child.
- 3.3.3 As with the holiday allowance, these payments may be recovered to support the cost of Festival or a Birthday in another foster placement, if the placement has ended and gifts have not yet been purchased / celebrations not yet held. This will be discussed with and agreed by the Fostering Practice Manager.
- 3.3.4 If the child moves placement but the gifts have been purchased, the receipts should be provided to the Fostering social worker and the gifts should move with the child.

### 34 Short Breaks for Foster Carers – up to 21 Nights for each placement:

- 3.4.1 The term 'short breaks' is used to describe a planned overnight stay of one or more nights with another approved foster carer, or a 'back up' carer.
- 3.4.2 The Fostering Service recognises the importance of supporting families who foster by providing **up to 21 nights** paid break from fostering during the financial year (April-March) per placement. The Short Breaks guidance is being reviewed and will be updated this financial year.
- 3.4.3 During this period the foster carer will continue to receive the full fostering allowance and fee for the child or children placed.
- 3.4.4 If a short break is required for a longer period, then fostering payments will cease once the 21 nights paid short break has been reached. If a child and carer need more than 21 nights Short Break per year, in exceptional circumstances, agreement for these to be paid at tier fee only can be negotiated. This will need to be presented by the Supervising Social Worker to the Fostering Service Manager for agreement. Short term carers who do not take any short breaks during children's placement will be **paid for a short break period up to 7 days**, after their children have moved on to permanent placement. This will be a pro-rata calculation depending on the length of placement. If a short-term carer does take a few days short break during children's placement and then they move on, the carers would not be entitled to any associated paid short break after the children move on.
- 3.4.5 The provision of a 'short break' arrangement is designed to support a fostering household to have regular paid overnight Short Breaks. It is not anticipated that this arrangement be used to provide day care.
- 3.4.6 Informal arrangements, with close family and friends not approved as back-up carers e.g. to provide occasional overnight care can be organised by foster carers themselves, following discussion with their Fostering Social Worker. These arrangements would not qualify for paid Short Breaks and therefore would not be counted as part of the 21-night paid Short Break arrangement. The payment arrangements for back-up carers are outlined in the Short Breaks guidance.

### 3.5 Foster Carer Transport Expenses

3.5.1 The majority of transport costs relating to children in care should be paid for from the child's weekly fostering allowance. Transport costs that can be claimed in addition to the weekly allowance are:

- Travel to birth family time
- Travel to specialist medical appointments
- School mileage outside local area. **The first 3 miles of home to school journeys is funded via the basic fostering allowance.** For any journey above this, mileage can be claimed by Foster Carers.
- Short breaks carers taking a child to a regular club activity which is close to the permanent carers but a much longer distance for the short breaks carer.
- Transport to and from short break carers
- Meetings as requested by the Children & Young People's Service

3.5.2 The following are also eligible for mileage or public transport reimbursement and are paid for by the Fostering Service:

- Attendance at training sessions or support groups
- Attendance at Panel

3.5.3 **All claims** for reimbursement must be submitted either on the Foster Carer Portal, or to the fostering social worker on a monthly basis (for formerly agreed mileage) on the official travel claim form showing:

- Foster Carer's Name
- Foster Carer's address
- Date of expense
- Type of expense; e.g. child-minding CM, Clothing C, Contact Mileage CONM, Non-school transport NST, School Transport ST and Equipment EQ
- Destination
- Reason for journey (including the child's name)
- Distance travelled in miles

3.5.4 The claim will be paid (subject to approval) at HMRC approved mileage allowance rates, currently 45 pence per mile. Please note that any journeys more than three months old cannot be approved for payment.

3.5.5 The use of a taxi for any journeys can only be made with prior agreement with the Child's Social Worker or the Fostering Social Worker. These journeys must be

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approved separately, usually by the Heads of Corporate Parenting and Children's Fieldwork or Children's Fieldwork Service Managers, outside of the usual transport expenses arrangements.

### 36 Foster Carer Portal and submitting your claims

3.6.1 From January 2020 our Foster Carers have been able to submit their expense and short break claims electronically. You can do this by logging into your foster carer portal (after being registered and trained by our business support staff) and submitting a claim on the portal.

3.6.2 The portal is easy to use with a little practice and our business support staff are always available if you should need support in any way. You can contact them at [fosterportal@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:fosterportal@suffolk.gov.uk), or by phone on 01473 265016.

3.6.3 Using the portal will significantly decrease the length of time it takes for your claims to be paid and is a more secure method for sharing information about our children. A full user guide is provided once you are registered on the portal, and is available on our [website](#).

3.6.4 Please follow the guidance in section 3.5.3 above on what to include in your claims. Some Tips/Reminders that will help our business support be able to process your claims faster:

- For mileage claims, please include in your description the purpose of your journey/s, date/s of your journey/s, and postcodes from and to.
- If claiming for a short break and the child's name isn't showing on your portal, you can email [fosterportal@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:fosterportal@suffolk.gov.uk) and we will add them for you manually.
- If the child's record is restricted on our system they will show on your portal selection list as "anonymous". You can just select an anonymous child and type the name in the description field.
- Please be sure to attach the receipts, via the attach file button on your portal screen, if claiming for equipment, clothing or parking tickets.

3.6.5 Short Break Claims on the portal guidance

Log in to the finance portal (click the green "log in with Suffolk sign on" button)

Once logged in, choose "one off claims", then "new claim".

When the claim page opens up, choose "Add client item" and on the new page choose your service level as "Short Break Allowance".

Complete the other fields (Description = Short break from e.g. 1st to 9th April 2023.

Quantity – the number of days for the short break.

Unit Cost - Use column C of the “allowances and fees for portal claims” sheet (available on our [website](#)) to find your daily rate (a.k.a. unit cost) for the allowance element.

Once all fields are completed, click "create". This will add the client item to your main claim and take you back to the main claim page.

Add client item again and this time choose your service level as “Short Break Tier xx” (according to your tier level). Use column E of the allowances and fees sheet to find your daily rate (a.k.a. unit cost) for the Tier Fee element.

Fill in the other fields in exactly the same manner that you did for the first client item and click create. The two client items together add up to the total short break payment.

Now click "submit" from the main claim page.

## **4 SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

### **4.1 Introductions to a new Adoptive or Reunification with Birth Family**

4.1.1 Where there are plans for a child or children to return to their birth relatives or to move to a new adoptive family or a permanent fostering placement, a placement planning meeting needs to be held to clarify roles and responsibilities and finance for all parties during this period. During the introductory period the foster carer will continue to receive the full weekly fostering allowance and fee payment (if applicable) until the date the child moves to the prospective adopters, new permanent foster carers or returns to the birth family.

4.1.2 Following a placement move, a further discretionary payment (100% of the fostering fee payment only, not including the allowance for the child) may be considered as a retainer for the previous foster placement if this is considered necessary as part of the care plan for the child, and there is significant ongoing support being provided by the carer. The maximum period of time for a discretionary payment will be 4 weeks.



- 4.1.3 Foster Carers travelling to adopters' home area as part of the transitions move-on plan, travel expenses and other reasonable expenses will be paid.
- 4.1.4 Introductions to a new carer for a child in hospital; where a carer visits a child 2 or 3 times a week, SCC will pay 50% of the fostering fee and allowance. If the carer is visiting daily and taking responsibility for milk, clothing and nappies, SCC will pay the full fee and allowance. This will be agreed by the Fostering Service Manager.
- 4.1.6 It is not SCC practice to pay retainer payments for carers who have been placed on hold, awaiting children who may be placed following a future court decision. In exceptional circumstances, this can be considered by the Head of Corporate Parenting, Head of Children's Fieldwork or County Resource panel.

### **4.2 Children and Young People at a Boarding School/ Residential School**

- 4.2.1 If a foster child is placed in a Boarding School or Residential School and the care plan is for a foster care placement during the school holidays and/or at weekends, then the foster carer will receive the full fostering allowance (and tier level payment (if applicable) for the time when the child is at home and a retainer of 50% of age allowance and fee payment (if applicable) will be paid per week when the child or young person is away.

### **4.3 Temporary Absence – Hospital Care**

- 4.3.1 If a child is absent from the placement as a result of hospitalisation, the full fostering allowance and fee payment (if applicable) will be paid for the first four weeks of a temporary absence.
- 4.3.2 If the plan is for the child to return to the foster carer then, at the Children In Care (CIC) Review, the role and responsibilities of the foster carer during the period of temporary absence need to be clarified.
- 4.3.3 A further discretionary payment of up to 50% of the weekly fostering allowance and fee payment (if applicable) can be considered after this period by the Fostering Service Manager and relevant Service Manager for the child.
- 4.3.4 If the foster carer is ill and/or hospitalised and they are a single carer, it should be planned for the child to move to a backup carer wherever possible. If the child needs to move placement, payments to the previous carer will usually cease. The Service Manager will consider a retainer payment, where the carer is in hospital

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for a temporary period and is expected to resume caring for the child in a short timescale.

- 4.3.5 If a child is placed for this period in a short break arrangement, this will not be deducted from the foster carer's short break entitlement.

### 4.4 Temporary Absence – Investigation of an Allegation

- 4.4.1 In the circumstances where a child is removed from a placement due to an ongoing investigation regarding an allegation, the foster carer will receive the full fostering allowance and fee payment (if applicable) for the first 14 days. After 14 days, the fee element only will be paid for up to 3 months. This shall not exceed the conclusion of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) process.

## 5 DISCRETIONARY PAYMENTS

- 5.1 There are a number of circumstances where additional discretionary payments are paid to foster carers in certain circumstances. The following payments need to be discussed and agreed at the **placement planning meeting** before the start of the placement or within a maximum 5 working days of commencement. These payments will be reviewed at regular intervals in line with the child or young person's care plan.

### 5.2 Initial Clothing Grant

- 5.2.1 In circumstances where a child or baby is placed into care with no clothing available or the clothing is inappropriate or insufficient, an additional clothing grant, of up to 1 week's maintenance allowance, will be considered by the Fostering Practice Manager. We emphasize that no child will be left with an inadequate wardrobe for any unreasonable period. Receipts need to be provided by the foster carer before payment can be made. In exceptional circumstances, if further additional clothing is required whose costs exceed one week's maintenance allowance for the child, this can be agreed by the Fostering Practice manager. If a child has to move schools due to a placement move then consideration will be given for a further discretionary payment of one week's allowance, to purchase necessary school uniform items. This needs to be agreed by the Fostering Practice Manager.

### 5.3 Educational or School Related/Out of School Activities

- 5.3.1 All costs relating to a child's educational needs should be identified at the **placement planning meeting** and reviewed at Child in Care (CIC) Review meetings, as stated in the care plan. The expectation is that carers meet the same financial costs of school that a parent would. Schools receive additional funding in the form of the Pupil Premium Plus Grant. This is to be used by the school to improve the young person's educational outcomes and should not be used on anything that the young person is already entitled to.
- 5.3.2 All Foster carers are expected to cover the costs of normal extracurricular activities and out-of-school clubs such as: dance, drama, scouts, swimming etc. through their weekly maintenance fostering allowance. This also includes the usual expenses incurred as the result of a child's attendance at school (e.g. school lunch, costs associated with educational trips/workshops).
- 5.3.3 It is recognised that there may be higher costs associated with music or sports tuition, where the child has skills or talents. Where foster carers anticipate these higher costs and the need for additional expenses, these must be identified at an early stage through the **placement planning meeting** or **Child In Care (CIC) Review**.
- 5.3.4 Financial support will be provided by the child's social worker for at least one residential trip per each key stage and one residential trip in post 16 education. This would be agreed by the relevant children's Service Manager.

### 5.4 Telephone - e.g. Landline, Mobile and Internet

- 5.4.1 Telephone costs, including the cost of mobile calls are covered within the weekly fostering allowance. This includes the cost of carers' calls to the fostering social worker, the child's social worker and any agreed calls that the child may make to their social worker, family, and friends.
- 5.4.2 It is recognised that for older children and teenagers there are additional costs from the use of mobile phone calls and Internet access. Foster carers are therefore advised to make sure they have agreed appropriate arrangements with the young person through the **placement planning meeting** and subsequent CIC reviews to cover these costs in line with the allowance they receive for caring for the child.

5.4.3 There are circumstances however, where it is appropriate to make a claim for the cost of a phone call (either mobile or landline) to a family member or friend, e.g. birth family contact abroad. Such arrangements will be agreed at the outset of the foster placement in the placement planning meeting and subsequently at Child In Care reviews or professionals meetings, as required. The Fostering Service do not provide mobile phone devices for the purpose of family time. If such arrangements are required, this needs to be discussed and agreed with the relevant children's fieldwork team practice manager.

## **6 CHILDCARE ARRANGEMENTS**

6.1 It is important that the foster carer is clear about what provision has already been identified for a child in line with their care plan, before making any other further arrangements for early education or any additional childcare arrangements. Such arrangements need to be discussed with the child's social worker and fostering social worker in advance at the **placement planning meeting**.

### **6.2 Early Education**

6.2.1 Children aged 3 – 4 are eligible for free part-time early education. Early education is also called nursery education or pre-school education. This provision is likely to be part of the Care Plan. This entitlement will be extended to 2-year-olds in foster care where at least one carer is in paid employment.

6.2.2 For further information please go to the following website: [www.suffolkcc.gov.uk/childcare](http://www.suffolkcc.gov.uk/childcare) or call 0845 60 800 33.

6.2.3 Where childcare costs for a fostered child are incurred due to a carer's working commitments outside of the home, these need to be agreed to in advance of the placement with the relevant child's social worker and fostering social worker and agreed to at the **placement planning meeting**.

### **6.3 Day Care - please see the delegated authority / short break policies**

[Delegating Authority Guidance](#)

6.3.1 Day Care arrangements are likely to be used to allow a foster carer to attend a Child In care (CIC) Review, school meeting, and consultations with Connect or

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attend a training event. This arrangement may also be used as part of an agreed support package for a specific carer.

6.3.2 This refers to arrangements made by the Fostering Service for day care with another foster carer. Day Care provision for a child in care can only be arranged with another registered foster carer with Suffolk County Council. These arrangements need to be organised with the fostering social worker and are likely to last from 2 to 8 hours. The foster carer providing Day Care can claim via expenses.

6.3.3 A day care arrangement could be used to allow a foster carer to attend a Child in Care (CIC) Review, school meetings, consultations with Connect or other therapeutic services, attend a training event or may be part of an agreed foster carer support package.

6.3.4 The cost per hour agreed by SCC is £5 per hour, for an approved foster carer and any back up carer.

## 6.4 Babysitting Arrangements

6.4.1 Babysitting arrangements are likely to cover an informal arrangement that takes place in the evening after 6pm, whilst the foster carers go out on a social or family activity.

6.4.2 Babysitting may also be used to cover an evening appointment to a training or support group event.

6.4.3 Such babysitting arrangements would be subject to an informed judgement by the carer; however, it is a requirement that a babysitter be aged 18 or over. Where these arrangements are taking place on a regular basis, the Fostering Service will arrange for an enhanced Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check.

6.4.4 Child care costs incurred to enable the carers to attend to fostering issues or meetings can be claimed via expenses. Any child care costs incurred for other reasons cannot usually be claimed, for example where a foster carer needs to attend a family event such as a wedding, Short Break care can be requested for this situation

### **Advice to All Foster Carers**

When planning childcare arrangements it is very important that the nature of the childcare provision is clarified in advance with the child's social worker and the fostering social worker, and that the arrangements for the provision of childcare are in line with the Childcare Act 2006 and the Fostering Regulations 2011. From time to time, OFSTED issues updated guidance to fostering providers about the definitions regarding childcare and fostering and carers will be informed on any changes at the earliest opportunity.

The finance for such arrangements can be made directly by the foster carer to the registered childminder providing care and claimed back on production of receipts or an invoice. Alternatively, payment can be arranged via the fostering social worker, or the child's social worker to the relevant childminder or foster carer.

The rate for payment for registered childminding or day care is currently £5 per hour up to maximum of £40.00 per day.

Any claims more than three months old will not be approved for payment.

## **7 ACCESS TO EQUIPMENT**

7.1.1 The Fostering Service will support foster carers by the purchase of new equipment or furniture to support the care of the child for example; cots, cot mattresses, beds, bedroom furniture, bedding, car seats, safety gates, and buggies. This equipment remains the property of the Fostering Service and is returnable. All new equipment will be purchased through the Suffolk County Council purchasing department by the Fostering Service.

7.1.2 Equipment should only be purchased by the Foster Carer and costs subsequently claimed back via the portal in an emergency . Normal practice should be for the Service to make the purchase and deliver to the foster carer, as this allows for VAT costs to be recouped.

Suffolk County Council will purchase the relevant items as 'setting up' costs to enable carers to start fostering, or to enable them to take new children. Once children are in placement foster carers are expected to purchase ongoing equipment (new beds, room redecoration etc. as the child grows) out of the child's weekly allowance.

7.2 The Fostering Service will supply all carers with recording books (upon request), training portfolio file and a lockable filing box for confidential information about a child. The Suffolk County Council Foster Carer Manual is available below.

[Foster Carer Manual](#)

## **8 FOSTERING NETWORK MEMBERSHIP**

8.1 All foster carers and link carers registered with the Suffolk Fostering Service are automatically entitled to an individual membership with the Fostering Network. This individual membership entitles the carer to a range of services and benefits, including free legal expenses insurance.

8.2 All carers are strongly advised to take up membership and enjoy the additional benefits of a national organisation dedicated to foster carers and fostering issues. A fostering social worker can advise you further on the process if you are not currently a member. Link to the website is here: [The Fostering Network is the UK's leading fostering charity | The Fostering Network](#)

## **9 YOUNG PEOPLE IN FOSTER CARE WHO ARE TRANSITIONING TO ADULTHOOD**

*[Please refer to the Staying Put Policy for further information and guidance- see the link below]*

### **9.1 Care Leavers**

9.1.1 The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 sets out the arrangements for moving onto independence through a pathway plan, which should commence at age 15 and a half years, unless a child enters care at post 16+ years. The pathway plan must ensure that preparation takes place to prepare for independence and reflects the current and future plans for **all** looked after young people in foster

care following the end of formal education at 18 or where arrangements are in place for training and/or employment at 16+.

9.1.2 Some young people will want to live with their foster carer and go to college, start employment or an apprenticeship; some young people will want to go to University locally and others will want to access University away from home. All these different scenarios can be supported under the Suffolk Staying Put Scheme.

9.1.3 In Suffolk, the Staying Put Scheme is designed to ensure that young people do not experience a sudden disruption to their living arrangements, that educational and training achievement and continuity is promoted and that all young people can make gradual steps from care to independence or to Adult Services.

The Staying Put Scheme is fully explained in the Suffolk Staying Put Policy and the associated financial guidance which should be referred to for more detailed information.

[Staying Put Policy](#)

Some instances where Staying Put might be beneficial for carers and young people are outlined below.

### **9.2 Young People 18+ – Attending School / FE College/ (Local) University, Full Employment or Training – Living at Home (former Foster Care)**

9.2.1 Where young people are living in foster care up to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and wish to remain in the same 'home' for example until they finish their schooling (e.g. A Levels) or a 16-19 college course, the foster care placement can be 'extended' and converted to a Staying Put Step 1 arrangement for up to one year for all eligible young people.

9.2.2 Where young people wish to remain in their foster home at 18 years old whilst moving into employment or training, the placement may also convert to a Staying Put Step 1 arrangement.

9.2.3 Young people who intend to start University in the academic year following their A levels will be supported under a Staying Put Step 1 arrangement until their course begins and student finance is in place.



- 9.2.4 A Staying Put Step 1 arrangement can be extended for up to a further two years to a Staying Put Step 2 arrangement if and when a Staying Put carer and young person wish to do so and it is assessed that the young person would benefit from remaining with their Staying Put Carer. The Step 2 arrangement can continue until the young person leaves the arrangement (if before 21), reaches the age of 21 or completes the programme of education or training being undertaken on the young person's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. Any extension beyond 21 years would be agreed on a case-by-case basis depending on specific need.
- 9.2.5 Leaving Care Services are responsible for ensuring that young people receive the independent benefits they are entitled to and which benefits depend on whether they stay in further education, move to higher education or into employment or formal training.
- 9.2.6 It is important that foster carers and young people have all the information they require to consider these options early on in the planning process. The Pathway Plan will include consideration of these options in advance. For further information foster carers can contact the Welfare Rights Team on 01473 581801, or the relevant Leaving Care Worker.

### **9.3 Young People in Higher Education (University) from 18 Years – Living Away from Foster Care (Home)**

- 9.3.1 For young people planning higher education (university) who require a home base during non-term time, holiday arrangements will be made for the former foster carers (now Staying Put carers) to continue to receive the Staying Put allowance for the period that the young person is in the home.
- 9.3.2 A retainer of 25% of the Staying Put allowance will be paid\* per week to maintain the arrangement during term time. This arrangement is in place for the period of time that covers studying for the first degree or equivalent up to the age of 22. An extension can be considered depending on individual circumstances e.g. course start date.

**Note:** \*This additional arrangement applies to those Staying Put carers who continue to be registered foster carers and who would be keeping a room for the young person that would prevent them from taking on another fostered child. For those carers with only one room for fostering, but willing to take Short Breaks/Short Break placements during term time, a retainer would be paid

whilst there is no child in placement in recognition of their continuing involvement in fostering.

*[Please see the Staying Put Policy for more details on arrangements for Young people living away at University].*

### 9.4 Young People with Additional Needs (Transition)

- 9.4.1 Staying Put arrangements apply to any young person who remains living with their former foster carer post 18 years old. This may include some young people with additional needs who are living in foster care and need to remain there whilst transition arrangements are made.
- 9.4.2 Where young people have a disability that meets an Adult Services, Fair Access to Care (Putting People First) criteria, the foster care placement will be converted to a Staying Put Arrangement on their 18th Birthday with plans to convert the arrangement to a Shared Lives/Adult Placement arrangement as soon as possible. Staying Put Step 1 arrangements for disabled young people are therefore a temporary arrangement and will continue until the former foster carers are approved as Shared Lives/Adult Placement carers.
- 9.4.3 For such young people, transitional planning will have commenced from their 14<sup>th</sup> birthday to ensure that appropriate plans are in place for adult services to continue with any support requirements beyond their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### APPENDIX A

#### Recommended Breakdown of Allowances

*What do your fees cover?*

*You are paid an allowance on a per child/young person per night basis when a child or young person is actually in residence. The payment covers all normal expenses for looking after a child / young person, as well as:*

- General wear and tear in the home.*
- Child/young person's pocket money and savings*
- Telephone calls to family members or significant others, including a small amount for calls to local friends. The cost of mobile phones is included in the allowance and this should be paid from pocket money if the placement plan allows for a young person to have access to a mobile phone.*
- General clothing, including school/college uniforms. (Exceptional expenses may be negotiated from the Child Care Social Worker)*
- Toiletries and cosmetics.*
- Glasses and contact lenses if required.*
- Leisure and any other out of school activities including sports equipment (exceptional circumstances may be negotiated from the Child Care Social Worker)*
- Subscription to clubs and activities [e.g. scouts and brownies] including any special clothing.*
- School books and stationery.*
- School trips (day trips only).*

## APPENDIX B

### 1. FOSTER CARE ALLOWANCES (National Government Minimum Rate)

Age Group	2024-2025 Allowance
0 – 1	165
2 – 3	170
4 – 10	187
11 – 15	213
16 – 17	249

### 2. Additional Payments Summary Guide

<b>Short Break</b>	21 nights paid Short Break per annum, foster carer continues to receive full payment (allowance and fee) for 21 nights. Longer periods of "Short Break" can be considered with another foster carer but payments will cease after 21 nights unless authorised by the Fostering Service Manager.
<b>Childcare Arrangements</b>	Registered childminding or day care with approved foster carers (£5 per hour max. £40.00 per day). Where higher costs are expected, discussion and approval from Fostering Social Worker is needed.
<b>Transport Expenses Claim</b>	<p>The following journeys are eligible for mileage or public transport reimbursement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Birth Family Time</li> <li>2) Specialist medical appointments</li> <li>3) Attendance at meetings requested by Children and Young People's Services</li> <li>4) Attendance of Training Sessions or support groups</li> <li>5) Short Break Carers taking a child to a regular club activity which is close to the permanent carers but a much longer distance for the short break carer</li> <li>6) School Transport (see next section)</li> <li>7) Travel to drop off or pick up a child from short break arrangement.</li> </ol> <p>Claims for reimbursement to be submitted on the portal or monthly on the official travel claim form, the following details must be included or the claim will be returned:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Foster Carers Name, Childs Name</li> <li>2) Date of journey</li> <li>3) Destination</li> <li>4) Reason for the journey</li> <li>5) The distance travelled</li> </ol>
<b>School Transport</b>	<p><b>The first 3 miles of home to school journeys is funded via the basic maintenance allowance.</b></p> <p>For any journeys above this, mileage can be claimed by Foster Carers. This must be agreed at the Placement Planning Meeting.</p> <p>Any agreed special arrangements must be regularly reviewed in line with the child's care plan</p>
<b>Use of Taxis</b>	The use of taxis for any journey can only be made in exceptional circumstances and must be agreed in advance by the Fostering Social Worker.
<b>Temporary Absence</b>	<p>Hospital Care: the full allowance (and tier level fee payment where applicable) will be paid for the first 4 weeks; a further discretionary payment of 50% can be considered for subsequent period.</p> <p>Investigation of an Allegation: where a child is removed from a placement the foster carer will receive 100% of the allowance (and tier level fee payment where applicable) for a period of 14 days. After 14 days, the fee element will only be paid for up to 3 months.</p>
<b>Discretionary Payments</b>	<p>In some circumstances – an additional grant may be considered to purchase clothing.</p> <p>Additional financial support will be provided for at least 1 residential trip per key stage.</p> <p>A discretionary payment for telephone costs may be considered to support <u>specific</u> family time needs of the child.</p>
<b>Initial Clothing Grant</b>	With prior approval at placement planning meeting. Claim up to one week's child's maintenance allowance and not to exceed one week's child's maintenance allowance, and receipts will be required. In exceptional circumstances, if further additional clothing is required, that would exceed one week's child's maintenance allowance, this will be agreed by the Practice or Service Manager

So that claims are dealt with promptly, please record clearly with receipts as required. Delays may occur if information is missing, or the claim is not an approved expense.