

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Fostering Service

Information about payments to
In-house foster carers
2023/24

**Foster
Sheffield's
Future**



www.sheffield.gov.uk/fostering

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This document is to give you an overview of payments that are made to you as a foster carer. This document will be reviewed annually by Sheffield City Council Fostering Service.

Beginning your journey: Payments for fostering equipment

When a foster carer is first approved or subsequently approved for additional placements, they can receive a grant to assist them with the purchasing of equipment.

A **maximum grant** of £750 will be paid to foster carers caring for children under 3 years of age.

A **maximum grant** of £400 will be paid for foster carers caring for children over 3 years of age.

Equipment purchased needs to be agreed with either the assessing social worker or the allocated fostering social worker.

No grants will exceed the maximum allowance. The replacement of equipment is then to be budgeted from the foster carer's weekly fee.

Looking after a foster child: The weekly fostering allowance and recommendations on how this payment should be used

The Department for Education sets out the National Minimum Allowance rates that foster carers should receive for looking after a child in their care. This national minimum allowance has been calculated by Central Government on the basis of the minimum amount that any foster carer needs to meet the cost of caring for a foster child.

In Sheffield City Council (SCC) Fostering Service, this payment is called the 'Weekly Allowance' and is in line with the Government set recommendations. Payment of this is made approximately every fortnight in arrears directly into the foster carer's bank account.

Only in the most exceptional circumstances will the Local Authority consider paying an increased Fostering Allowance, which is entirely discretionary and based on the assessed needs of the child.

The weekly 'Allowance' for 23/24

Weekly Allowance Rates		
Age	22/23	23/24
0 to 4	£141	£159
5 to 10	£156	£175
11 to 15	£177	£199
16+	£207	£233

The allowance is intended to cover the following:

- Food
- Toiletries
- Toys and play equipment

- Activities including school trips
- Clothing – see section 3
- Pocket money – see section 5
- Mobile phone top ups
- Bus fares to school
- Contribution to household costs, for example, heating, lighting
- Day to day transport, either by car or public transport
- Family day trips
- Personal allowance for children and young people to participate in hobbies and activities e.g. cinema, swimming, sport.

Recommended Weekly Pocket Money Rates

Pocket Money: All school age children (5 years plus) should receive a minimum weekly pocket money payment. This should be given in cash to the child weekly or a proportion of it, with the rest saved. Pocket money is not to be confused with other expenditure given to the child for activities.

Savings: We encourage all young people to save money for their future as this will help them understand about money, establish independence skills, responsibility and help them in their development into adult life. We would expect that you help your child achieve this. Once a child becomes 11 years you should encourage them to start saving a regular weekly amount of their pocket money.

For children who are 11 years + and have been in your care for more than 16 weeks, you are asked to support them to open a bank account for savings. If you are finding this difficult to do, please speak with your fostering social worker or child’s social worker to help you to make this happen.

For any children in a short term or task placement, any money not given in hand will be saved and recorded. The child will then take this money with them when they move on from the placement.

Age:	Pocket money :
5	£2.50
6	£3.00
7	£3.50
8	£4.00
9	£4.50
10	£5.00
11	£6.00
12	£7.00
13	£8.00
14	£9.00
15	£10.00
16+	£15.00

Age:	Minimum Savings:
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	£1.00
12	£1.00
13	£2.00
14	£2.50
15	£3.50
16+	£5.00

*Please note that Sheffield City Foster Carers looking after a child aged 16 – 18 years currently receive a 16+ allowance of £35.00 per week; £15.00 pocket money and also an allowance of £20.00 to contribute towards the cost of a travel pass and/or any additional requirements as your child develops into independence. This allowance should be discussed at placement planning/pathway planning as to how this is to be paid and used by the young person. We would expect carers to top up where appropriate. Some young people in College may also receive an Educational Maintenance Allowance.

For young people who remain in your care post 18 years, they are entitled to support from the Leaving Care Team and can remain with you under Staying Put arrangements. If this applies to a child in your care, please speak with your fostering social worker who can arrange a meeting with you and the Supported Lodgings coordinator to discuss the package of support that you will be entitled to within this arrangement.

Extra Curriculum Activities

Sheffield City Council is keen to encourage all children in care to experience a wide range of extra curriculum activities. This can for example include, sport, music, dance lessons. Foster carers will generally be expected to fund such activities from the weekly allowance. All foster carers are expected to promote activities. In exceptional circumstances requests can be submitted to the Fostering Service Manager in relation to financial contribution to activities that have a high cost. These cases will be looked at individually and a contribution may be made. Support carers may be able to request a reasonable sum, for weekend activities.

Annual payments: holiday, birthday and cultural celebration grants

Holiday	
Age	
0 to 4	£255
5 to 10	£290
11 to 15	£445
16+	£505

Birthday	
Age	
0 to 4	£130
5 to 10	£150
11 to 15	£220
16+	£270

Cultural Celebration	
Age	
0 to 4	£130
5 to 10	£150
11 to 15	£220
16+	£270

****These payments are in relation to the child and will be paid annually.***

Holiday payments will be made in June. The holiday payment is used to fund a holiday for the child or pay for alternative extra curriculum activities e.g. over the summer holidays.

Birthday payments will be paid within 1 month prior to the child's birthday. Birthday payments would cover the cost of a young person's present and may also pay for a party. It is acknowledged that young people are unique and what this money contributes towards will be different based on the needs of that child.

The annual cultural celebration payment can be utilized in line with other cultural celebrations at the request of the foster carer in consultation with the fostering social worker but will only be paid once each year and cannot exceed the amount specified.

Transport Costs

The weekly fostering allowance contains a transport element for day to day journeys e.g. local appointments, day trips, car parking. Exceptions to this will be:

- Regular contact
- School journeys (outside the usual catchment area)
- Other journeys as agreed by the supervising social worker e.g. daily hospital visits, long distance journeys for contact
- Introductions to a new placement/adoption
- Training

The current rate is 45p per mile.

Clothing

An initial clothing allowance is **not paid automatically**. Expenditure will be discussed with the fostering social worker when a child is first placed. Expenditure is then agreed by the Team Manager and approved by the Fostering Service Manager. The **maximum** payment any foster carer will receive in relation to clothing is:

Clothing	
Age	
0 to 4	£100
5 to 10	£150
11 to 15	£200
16+	£250

This payment is only paid when the child/young person is first admitted in to care. The purchasing of additional clothes is then to be budgeted from the weekly allowance.

Allowances for school uniform: can be negotiated when a child is first accommodated or when a new placement necessitates a change of school. This will need discussion with the fostering social worker and is not automatically paid. The maximum payment any foster carer will receive in relation to purchasing school uniforms is:

Uniform	
Age	
5 - 10	£100
11 - 16	£175

The further replacement and purchasing of school uniform is the responsibility of the foster carer and should be budgeted from the weekly allowance.

Foster Carer ‘skill level fees’: What this means, how it is paid, and how to progress on your fostering journey

In addition to the weekly allowance for looking after a child in your care, a fostering agency can also pay a skill level fee payment on top of the allowance to recognise a foster carers’ time, skills and experience. In Sheffield City Council, we call this the ‘Skill Level Fee’.

Every foster carer will have been assessed against the Skill Levels criteria, (see appendix 2). A newly approved foster carer will generally be a Skill Level 1 foster carer and can progress as they develop their skills on their fostering journey. The following weekly payments are made in relation to foster carer’s Skill Level and this payment is only made when you have a child in placement.

**This payment has been reviewed in 2019, and is now made for every looked after child in placement.*

Age Banded Skill Level Fee per week (paid per child) (Revised April 2019)			
	Age 0 - 4	Age 5 - 7	Age 8+
Level 1	£125	£150	£185
Level 2	£190	£190	£200
Level 3	£210	£210	£210

Holiday entitlement and payments

In Sheffield City Council we are proud that our foster carers act as good parents and wherever possible take children in their care on holidays with them to give them opportunities, fun and new experiences in the same way they would their own children. However there are circumstances when this is not possible, and because of this, foster carers can access up to 14 nights paid holiday per year, i.e. when the foster carer has a holiday without the child and the child is placed with an alternative foster carer or extended fostering family member.

The foster carer will continue to receive their Skill Level payment (i.e. fee) for those 14 days. The foster carer will **not** receive the weekly allowance fee (i.e. the allowance to meet the costs of the child in their care) as this allowance will follow the child.

Please Note:

It is really important that foster carers planning a holiday without a child who is placed in their care first have a discussion with the fostering social worker **before booking.** This is to ensure that this provision can be provided at that time. We would encourage carers not to take holiday at significant times e.g. child’s birthday, Christmas, significant times of contact.

Sheffield City Council approved Foster Carers providing holiday care:

The current arrangement for foster carers providing holiday care for children is that they receive the same allowance as 'Family Support Carers,' which comprises the child's weekly allowance and payment of £125, (see section below, "Family Support providing holiday care"). This has been reviewed and from 28th February 2020 holiday payment will be made up of the carer's skill level fee and the child's weekly allowance and will be paid pro rata. The payment for holiday care is made directly to the foster carer providing the holiday care and comprises of their current skill level fee and the child's weekly allowance (See allowances and fees).

If you are a foster carer who has been approved as a "holiday/support" carer at Skills Level 1 and you are wanting to progress through the skills level, you should speak with your social worker about how you can evidence your skill level progression as you journey through your fostering career. This should be evidenced within your personal development plan, and could include training, attendance at support groups, experience of caring for a range of children with varying complexity of needs, and involvement in the fostering task. We value all our foster carers, and know that here in Sheffield City, many of our holiday/support carers go on to have a long and varied career within fostering; providing a range of placements from holiday care, support care, task centred placements and permanency for many of our children and we welcome you in this fostering journey.

Family Support providing "holiday care"

In Sheffield City Council we realise there are circumstances where a carer may take a holiday without the child/ren by utilising their own extended family/support network (i.e. stays with a grandparent, auntie etc). We acknowledge that this maintains a 'normal' family experience for that child. In line with best practice, a placement meeting will be held involving the carer, child's social worker, fostering social worker and support carer to draw up an agreed support plan in respect of this holiday care, and agree delegation of responsibility to the foster carer. In this situation, the payment will be made directly to the approved main foster carer to fund this provision.

Family Support Care		
Age	P/Wk 22/23	P/Wk 23/24
0 to 4	£266	£284
5 to 10	£281	£300
11 to 15	£302	£324
16 +	£332	£358

**In both circumstance, these breaks will be included within the 14 night allowance and must be agreed with the child's social worker and fostering social*

Additional placement support provision: Support Care

The Fostering Service acknowledges that there will be exceptional circumstances when additional support (i.e. 'Support Care') needs to be negotiated due to the needs of the child/ren within your placement. We thank you for your resilience and ongoing commitment to fostering during these difficult times. There may be occasions when the Fostering Service advocates for this support which might be against your wishes, but this is to support you, your family and the children in your care. There may be occasions when you have discussed the difficulties with your worker and requested this support yourself, and this is okay too.

The Service will work alongside you, together with the Child's Social Worker, Fostering Team Manager and Service Manager to agree a support plan. This will be reviewed as part of your Fostering Annual Review and Child's Statutory Review process. Support Care will not impact on your skills and allowances as the main carers and **will not** be considered as part of your 14 day holiday entitlement.

Carers providing the support care will receive a skill based fee and child allowance which is paid pro rata

Day Care

Foster carers who provide day care for other foster children will receive a standard payment. This is dependent on the duration of the care provided and will be paid at an hourly rate of £4.50 per child.

Retainer payments

In exceptional circumstances a retainer fee may be paid to the foster carer. These will be discussed with the carer and fostering social worker as part of the team around the placement planning, and must be approved by the Team Manager and Service Manager. Retainer fees are paid at £125

These payments will be monitored and reviewed on an agreed time limited period only, by the Fostering Service Manager

Out of Hours

For out of hour's provision an availability fee of £125 will be paid per week. If a child is placed during this time, an allowance and skill fee will be paid and the availability fee will cease.

*Please see appendix - "Expectations of out of hours foster carer"

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) / Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

DLA can only be claimed for children under 16 - anyone over 16 must apply for Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

You are expected to administer the DLA/PIP to promote the welfare of the child and to assist their care. Where possible, it should be paid in to a dedicated bank account in the name of the child.

The child's social worker is responsible for the oversight of its use in partnership with the foster carer and may take a more direct role in administering the account.

Any surplus that is built up remains the property of the child and goes with the child when they leave the placement.

Any mobility allowances should be spent to promoting the child's mobility, for example, taxi fares, bus passes.

This is not a SCC allowance but relates to child's additional needs as a result of their disability. If you feel that the child you are caring for meets the criteria for this allowance you should speak to the child's social work. Further information can be found as www.gov.uk/disability-living-allowance-children

Disability Skill Allowance

The Fostering Service recognises the additional skills necessary to look after a child that has a disability. The following additional weekly fee payment will be made to the foster carer:

Disability Skill Allowance	
Lower	£20.00
Medium	£40.00
Higher	£60.00

To receive this payment the foster carer must evidence that they are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance payments and this will be reviewed on an annual basis. The payment will depend on the DLA payment and link to the level of payment DLA pay. The foster carer must also evidence that the DLA payment is being spent appropriately or saved for the child.

Short Breaks Scheme

This is the support service offered to children with disabilities. Day care payments will be paid at an hourly rate up to 12 hours of £7.50.

Overnight payments will be:

Short Breaks for Disabled Children Scheme (12 to 24 Hours)				
	0 to 4 years	5 to 10 years	11 to 15 years	16 years and over
Level 1	£46.29	£48.00	£50.71	£54.00
Level 2	£60.57	£62.29	£65.00	£68.29
Level 3	£62.71	£64.43	£67.14	£70.43

****A waking night fee of £15 will be paid subject to Team Managers approval.***

Refer a Friend

In Sheffield City Council, we know that the very best ways to recruit foster carers is through the wonderful examples of quality care that our foster carers provide to our children and evidence on a daily basis. We are really proud of you. As foster carers you know what it is that makes a good carer, and your commitment, knowledge, enthusiasm and motivation is what sets you apart.

People interested in becoming carers really want to hear and learn from you. This is also backed up by what research tells us. We need you to help us to recruit more foster carers, and to support our new carers on their learning journey in the fostering task.

In achieving this, any foster carer who refers a friend to the Fostering Service who are then subsequently approved as a Sheffield City Council foster carer, will receive a payment. The payment will be made to the referring foster carer once a child is placed with the newly approved foster carer. This must be for a full time placement. The payment will be £500.

www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/whyfostercarerscare-Fostering Network: Why Foster Carers Care.

Insurance Claims

Foster carers will be expected to have the relevant insurance cover for any damage. It will only be in exceptional circumstances that an insurance claim can be made against SCC public liability insurance. Such claims will be considered by the Fostering Service Manager.

All foster carers, where applicable, are expected to have fully comprehensive car insurance. The insurance certificate needs to state the car is used for business use or as a foster carer. It is the foster carer's responsibility to ensure all documentation is kept up to date in relation to cars, e.g. MOT certificate and renewal of insurance. These documents must be available for the fostering social worker to check as part of the Annual Health & Safety Check.

Overpayments

On occasion a foster carer may mistakenly be overpaid. It is the foster carer's responsibility to notify the Fostering Service as soon as possible. An agreement will then be made in regard to repaying the overpayment.

Tax, Tax-free earnings and National Insurance

As a foster carer you are classed as self-employed for tax and national insurance purposes, so you need to register with HMRC. You may also be able to claim a range of benefits.

Tax exemption

There's a fixed tax exemption of up to £10,000 per year (less if for a shorter period) which is shared equally among any foster carers in the same household. This means you do not have to pay tax on the first £10,000 income you make from fostering. You can find further information at: www.gov.uk/foster-carers/help-with-the-cost-of-fostering

Tax relief

On top of the £10,000 exemption, you also get tax relief for every week (or part week) that a child is in your care. This means you do not have to pay tax on some of your earnings over £10,000.

Age of child	Tax relief
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Under 11	£200 per child
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Over 11	£250 per child
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Pensions

If you foster, you'll be eligible for National Insurance credits, which counts towards your State Pension.

Appendices

Out of Hours

- Provide a 24 hour service to the Emergency Duty Service for the full age range 0 – 18yrs in order to offer placements outside of office hours.
- The expectation that you would be available to take a placement at very short notice, possibly in the middle of the night.
- Accept that information that may not be readily available at the point of placement outside of office hours
- Be able to meet the needs for children from different cultural heritages e.g. dietary requirements, skin / hair care, religious needs i.e. prayer
- Care for children and young people who are in a crisis situation and whose emotional presentation, behaviour or circumstances may be challenging.
- Be available during the daytime as children may or may not be attending school and may need to be accompanied to various appointments.
- Be available, where possible, to take a child / young person to and from school.
- Be available to accept a placement for between 72 hours and up to one week, with flexibility.

Parent and Baby

- Have sufficient accommodation to accommodate a parent and baby placement.
- Understand that the legal situation / financial circumstances may be complex and variable. Both parent and baby may be looked after or it may be only the baby or only the parent.
- Have proven experience and knowledge of child development in order to support and advise appropriately the parent in the care of their child.
- Have proven experience and ability to work effectively with older young people.
- Be able to undertake and complete written assessments specific to the individual circumstances.
- Be prepared, if necessary, to give evidence in court.