

**Report for:** Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee: 20 October 2020

**Title:** Foster carer allowance policy

**Report**

**authorised by :**  Ann Graham, Director, Children & Young People's Service

**Lead Officer:** Beverley Hendricks, Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding & Social Care

**Ward(s) affected:** N/A

## 1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1 The policy explains Haringey's Fostering Allowance payments to foster carers. It details the weekly fees and allowances paid to carers and explains the circumstances in which additional payments can be made.
- 1.2 Haringey Council's weekly payments to foster carers acknowledges the significant contribution made by our foster carers to caring for our most vulnerable children and theyng people. Our allowances are in line with The Fostering Network Guidance and the allowances provided by other leading London authorities and Independent Fostering Agencies.

## 2. Recommendations

That this policy be endorsed.

## 3. Reasons for decision

- 3.1 Haringey Council is committed to offering high quality care in a formal setting to children and theyng people who have a variety of needs. We acknowledge that our foster carers are an integral part of our team. We value their skills and acknowledge the quality of care that foster carers have provided for children and theyng people.
- 3.2 In line with the high levels of skills and commitment that many of our foster carers have shown, we have introduced a professional foster carer structure. We anticipate that this will allow foster carers opportunities for advancement and will encourage them to take on extra responsibilities.
- 3.3 The model is a tiered scheme, and the amount foster carers would receive takes into account both the 'placement offer' e.g. the age, numbers and range of complex behaviours of the children foster carers wish to foster, alongside 'competence' to provide care for the children which foster carers wish to foster.

- 3.4 The decision on which tier a foster carer would be on will be made separately to the panel recommendation on their overall approval. A 'Tier Alignment Form' will be completed with the foster carers and presented to the Fostering and Adoption Service Manager prior to, or just after, the First Annual Review is presented to panel. The guidance in this document will help foster carers and their social worker in identifying which tier best matches their offer and current level of experience, skills and knowledge.
- 3.5 What if a foster carer disagrees with the decision? If they disagree with the recommendation which we have made, their own views will be included in the Tier Alignment Form. If they then disagree with the decision made by the Fostering and Adoption Service Manager, a final decision will be made by the Head of Service.
- 3.6 Can we offer more than one tier or change tier levels? foster carers will be able to offer to care for children at different tiers at the same time, for example a teenager at tier 3 and a younger child at tier 2, or perhaps offer one child at tier 1 but if taking 2 children they would be offering this at tier 3. Foster carers can change tiers as they gain more experience, or their personal circumstances change. It means that they will have flexibility and choice in what they can offer. It also allows for career progression as they gain more experience and knowledge.
- 3.7 Length of Service. To reward those who have fostered for Haringey Council continuously we will offer a length of service reward. They must have fostered for Haringey Council continuously for a minimum of 5 years and have had at least one placement per year. This will start from the time that the tiered model has been agreed and will not be backdated for their service with Haringey Council prior to the tiered model being agreed.

## **4. Background information**

### **4.1 Payments**

- 4.1.1 Payments are made weekly for each child or young person in placement and are made up of two parts: The training and support reward element for the foster carer's skills and requirements, and the child element of the allowance which will cover the expenses associated with the fostering task.
- 4.1.2 Where a foster carer has a new child or young person in placement, this will be reviewed in line with the new tier system.
- 4.1.3 The annual review will be used as a mechanism to review the current level of complexity which a foster carer is caring for a child/young person. Thus, the tier system will be a gradual change.

### **4.2 Allowances and rewards**

- 4.2.1 The total foster care allowance is subject to taxation. There are tax allowances and it is unlikely that foster carers will be required to pay tax. However, foster carers must discuss their tax returns with the local tax office.

NB: The tax office do not make a distinction between the reward and the

allowance paid.

4.2.2 Below is the breakdown of basic elements for a foster carer's role.  
Training and Support Reward Element (Under 11s Foster Carers)

<b>Under 11s Foster Carers</b>	<b>Reward for Foster Carers</b>
Task Centred	£192

Training and Support Reward Element (11s and over Foster Carers)

<b>11s and over Foster Carers</b>	<b>Reward for Foster Carers</b>
Task Centred	£205

4.3 Child allowance

4.3.1 This part of the payment is to be used by the foster carer to cover all the cost directly associated with providing care for a particular child or young person and the extra general expenses associated with the fostering task. This weekly allowance is based on the Fostering Network's recommended allowance rates.

<b>Foster Carer Tier</b>	<b>Old weekly rate</b>		<b>New weekly rate</b>	
	<b>Under 11</b>	<b>Over 11</b>	<b>Under 11</b>	<b>Over 11</b>
Probation	£192	£205	£192	£205
Tier 1			£192	£205
Tier 2			£217	£230
Tier 3 (Complex Needs / Challenging Behaviour)	The weekly rate for Tier 3 is dependent on the nature and complexity of the placement and will be discussed with you.			
Length of continuous service allowance. This is a one-off payment and is not part of the weekly allowance.	5 years - £200 7 years - £250 10 years - £300 15 years - £500 20 years - £1,000			

#### 4.4 Foster carer tiers

4.4.1 After extensive initial training and approval, the first year will be a probationary period. Foster carers need to demonstrate the ability to:

- Work in line with foster carer agreement
- Meet responsibilities listed in carers responsibilities
- Engage in obligatory training
  - Paediatric First Aid
  - Safer Caring and Allegations
  - Recording and Sharing
  - Delegated Authority and The National Minimum Standards
- Complete training, support and development standards (TSDs).
- Attend a minimum of 8 support groups per year.

4.4.2 Foster carers are approved as individuals or partners. If partners, both must complete probationary period successfully and be reviewed annually to maintain a minimum Tier 1 status. However, recognising additional training requirements for Tier 1/2, one carer may be considered for further career progression.

4.4.3 Tier 1 The first Annual Review will assess the Probationary Period. Successful completion will lead to progression onto Tier 1 and the opportunity for gaining knowledge and experience with a view to further career development.

FOSTER CARERS WILL NORMALLY OPERATE FOR AT LEAST ONE YEAR AT TIER ONE AND MUST UNDERTAKE ANY INDIVIDUAL TRAINING PROGRAMME DETAILED IN THE ANNUAL REVIEW.

Suggested Training:

- Fostering changes.

4.4.4 Tier 2 (£25.00 increase in allowance per week) In addition to the standards outlined in Probationary Period and Tier One, foster carers must show that they:

- Maintain 30 hours a year training.
- Attend 8 support groups per year.
- Demonstrate a high level of skills in working complex cases e.g. complex needs and challenging behaviour.
- Work actively and on an outreach basis with parents/families and liaise effectively with other agencies.
- Carry out specific and specialised pieces of work with children and young People. E.g. life story work, behaviour modification and preparation for independence.
- Assist in the recruitment of new carers e.g. Skills to Foster.
- Are involved in the training of other carers e.g. Leading with TSD's for new carers.
- Support other carers – E.G mentoring, buddying, 'POD' buddying.
- Provide respite and emergency placements.
- Write reports for reviews/meetings.

Progression on to Tier 3 will be discussed (if appropriate) at the foster carer's Annual Review and may be deferred to a later date. Haringey Council support workers, children's social workers and other professionals will be approached for feedback on the foster carer's competency. The final recommendation as to progress of foster carers to tier 3 will lie with Service Manager. There may be a proposed timescale to look at foster carers again if they feel further skills need to be demonstrated.

4.4.5 Tier 3 (Specialism Carers) In addition to the standards outlined in the Probationary Period and Tiers 1-2, Foster carers must show that they:

- Provide specialist placements (eg. challenging teenagers, persistent absconders, young people on remand, disabilities, mother and baby).

4.5 Breakdown of child/young person's allowance

4.5.1 A child / young person's allowance is included in the fostering allowance payments made to the foster carer and covers costs for pocket money, lunch, clothing, mobile phone and recreation. There will be a discussion with foster carers regarding the breakdown of the child / young person's allowance.

The cost of routine journeys to and from school must also be met out of the fostering allowance. Foster carers must accompany all primary aged children to school each day and on occasions escort vulnerable teenagers each day. The fostering allowance element for travel will cover the cost of travel cards, occasional mini cabs etc. to get the children and young people to school and social activities. If the foster carer is able to demonstrate that the travel element of the allowance has been exceeded, receipts should be submitted to the supervising social worker for a team manager to approve any additional costs.

4.5.2 The child / young person's allowance includes a savings allowance for the child or young person which is £20 a week and which the foster carer must ensure is saved for the child or young person as discussed at the Placement Agreement Meeting. Children and young people, where eligible, must have a bank account opened in their name and saving must be placed into that account. Any leaving care allowance for older young people will also be discussed, including clothing allowance.

4.5.3 Foster carers must take children 0-6 to and from contact and occasionally supervise contact as appropriate.

4.5.4 Any arrangements, including financial ones, made and signed by the carer and the child or young person in placement agreement meetings are binding for all parties.

4.5.5 It is recommended that any weekly (and other) payments or allowances given to the child or young person are recorded by the foster carer and signed by the child or young person in the back of the child or young person's logbook.

4.5.6 Due to the unpredictability of placements, foster carers may have little time to prepare for a child's arrival, therefore at the time of placement the social worker accompanying the child to the foster carer's home will take an initial payment of £100 per child to cover emergency clothing, equipment etc. It is

recommended that the foster carer should purchase a minimum amount of clothing to ensure the young person is comfortable until the foster carer is aware of the child's plan.

#### 4.6 Payments

4.6.1 Foster carers must open their own dedicated bank account. Haringey council does not have the facility to cash cheques for foster carers.

4.6.2 The foster carer is responsible for confirming with the brokerage team that a placement has been made and when it ends. When a child or young person leaves a placement, the foster carer must contact the payments officer within 24 hours of the placement ending, as this will prevent overpayments being made.

4.6.3 In the event of an overpayment, the foster carer must immediately return the overpayment to the payments officer. Where foster carer receives overpayments and does not return the overpayments to Haringey Council, legal action through the debt recovery section will be instigated.

NB. Carers on benefits should discuss the foster carer payments with their local benefits agency.

#### 4.7 Additional and discretionary payments

4.7.1 Holiday payments will be made once a year for each placement at the following rates:

Age of Child / Young Person	Holiday Payment
Under 11	£754
Over 11	£874

4.7.2 Payment of the holiday allowance will be made automatically at Week 15 (beginning July) and the allowance should be spent on a holiday. Alternatively, team managers can agree for leisure activities during the school holidays. If the holiday allowance is not spent or is partially spent, the foster carer must notify Haringey Council and the foster carer may be asked to return the funds. In the event that a child moves placement between week 15 and week 19 (August) a proportion of the holiday allowance will need to be repaid to Haringey Council. Haringey Council will confirm how much of the holiday allowance will need to be repaid. The holiday allowance will not need to be returned if the child goes on holiday prior to week 19 and then moves placement. Foster carers can request an early payment for holidays taking place before July, however if the child is moved prior to the holiday the foster carer may be required to return the holiday allowance to Haringey Council. If a foster carer is required to return a proportion or all of the holiday allowance to the Council, the holiday allowance must be returned in the amounts specified by the Council within 7 days of the request.

4.7.3 Foster carers will be asked to evidence how much money has been spent on the holiday allowance and this evidence must be provided to Haringey Council on request.

- 4.7.4 Holidays must not be taken during school term time and any holidays need to be agreed by the Head of Service. The allocated social worker will make the holiday request on behalf of the child or young person and foster carer, which will be in writing if the child is traveling abroad with the foster carer.
- 4.8 Special activity payments are made to cover the cost of a child or young person going on a residential trip with a school or club or participating in leisure or cultural activities that involve overnight stays. The maximum amount payable per child or young person is £225. Any requests for special activity payments must be requested in writing to the Service Manager (Fostering). The request must include confirmation that any holiday with a club related to a hobby or social activity is not during school time. In addition, the appropriate authorisation in writing must have been gained from the appropriate manager for the child/young person to attend the trip. This is separate to the authorisation of the Service Manager for Fostering. The Service Manager for the allocated child/young person need to also authorise the holiday request.
- 4.9 A fixed allowance will be paid to cover the cost of a present and/or celebration for the child or young person's birthday which will either be £185 if the child is under 11 or £232 if the child or young person is over 11.
- 4.10 A fixed allowance will be paid in December each year to cover the cost of a present and/or celebration of a religious festival which will either be £185 if the child is under 11 or £232 if the child or young person is over 11.
- 4.11 Some emergency placements may require an urgent payment towards clothing. The maximum amount payable is £100 per child or young person. The foster carer must provide receipts for the purchases made and / or provide a written account of expenditure.
- 4.11.1 In non-emergency situations the social worker accompanying the child or young person to the placement will make every effort to retrieve his or her clothing and personal items from their home. If a child or young person goes to a placement without appropriate clothing and no clothes are available from home, a special clothing allowance can be paid, in an amount depending on circumstances and need, up to a maximum of £230. The child's social worker or supervising social worker will provide an outline of the items needed and the estimated costs. The special clothing allowance may be paid on advice from the social worker and must first be agreed by a senior manager.
- 4.11.2 An annual payment of £80 is available to help towards the cost of the child's school uniform or £180 if the child attends a new school and there is clear evidence that they need special clothing. This is paid on advice from the social worker and must first be agreed by senior managers.
- 4.12 Out of hour placements
- 4.12.1 Foster carers who have been approved for more than 2 years are eligible to take out-of-hours emergency placements. They would need to be available at night (after 6pm) and at weekends and have a vacancy for a child or young person. They should be prepared to keep the child or young person until plans are made to move him/her on.

- 4.12.2 The foster carer will receive one off payment of £100, as well as the fostering fee and the child allowance.
- 4.12.3 The payment is paid for one placement, e.g. the foster carer will receive a payment of £100 for a sibling group of 3, but if the foster carer has 3 children young people from different families this is seen as 3 different placements and would be paid at £300.00. This is a one off payment for accepting the emergency placement.
- Example:
- Placement made Saturday 2:00pm payment is £100 plus child allowance (pro rata).
  - Another Placement made 9:00pm from the same sibling group the same Saturday as above, only child allowance is paid.
  - Separate placement made next day Sunday afternoon, payment of £100 plus child allowance is paid.
- 4.13 During a period in which a child /young person is being introduced to a foster carer, a payment is made at a daily rate £24.29 for each day the child is with the foster carer during the day time and for overnight, it will be the full daily fostering allowance rate.
- 4.14 Foster carers will be provided with any necessary equipment to facilitate foster placements e.g. bed, etc.
- 4.14.1 The Fostering Service keeps an inventory of all the equipment supplied by the department. Where equipment is damaged, this must be reported by the foster carer to the supervising social worker. An agreement will be made to dispose of the equipment accordingly. The equipment will be collected when foster carer stops fostering for Haringey Council. Any equipment or furniture supplied to foster carers is the property of Haringey Council and may be subject to scrutiny.
- 4.15 Education
- 4.15.1 Foster carers must supply basic school equipment, such as books, pens and calculators, and provide for school day trips from the weekly allowance.
- 4.15.2 Foster carers are responsible for payments for school dinners for any children / young people in their care.
- 4.16 Haringey Council funds the membership costs for all approved foster carers to The Fostering Network, a national forum for foster carers. When foster carers have not had a placement for over a year, membership will suspend until the foster carer resumes fostering.
- 4.16.1 All approved and active foster carers are members of the Haringey Foster Carers Association.

4.17 In some circumstances you may be required to care for children during the day that you are not looking after. For example, caring for children while parents attend court. The rate you will be paid for this is £10.00 per hour.

4.17.1 Haringey Council provides crèche facilities at training venues to enable foster carers to attend courses.

4.18 Where children or young people have been removed from placement following an investigation carried out pursuant to section 47 Children Act 1989, foster carers may be eligible for a discretionary payment of the reward element of their allowance. The discretionary payment if granted (in Haringey Council's sole discretion) will continue until a decision is made at the final strategy meeting and may be paid for up to 3 months, at the discretion of the Council.

## **5. Contribution to strategic outcomes**

- Borough Plan 2019-2022
- People Priority: A Haringey where strong families, strong networks and strong communities nurture all residents to live well and achieve their potential

## **6. Use of Appendices**

Annex 1 – flowchart for progressions

## **7. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

N/A

Flow Chart for Progressions

Approved at Panel



Probationary year

- Probationary year work in line with foster carer agreement
- Engage in obligatory training:
  - Paediatric First Aid
  - Safer Caring and Allegations
  - Recording and Sharing
  - Delegated Authority and The National Minimum Standards
- Complete training, support and development standards (TSD's)
- Attend minimum 8 support groups



Level One (minimum Standard of Carers after 1<sup>st</sup> year)

The first Annual Review will assess the probationary period. Successful completion will to progression onto Level One and the opportunity for gaining knowledge and experience with a view to further career development. **CARERS WILL NORMALLY OPERATE FOR AT LEAST ONE YEAR AT THIS LEVEL AND MUST UNDERTAKE ANY INDIVIDUAL TRAINING PROGRAMME DETAILED IN THE ANNUAL REVIEW.**

Suggested Training

- Fostering changes

### Tier 2

Carers must meet all the requirements of the Probationary period, Tier 1 and 2 (including undertaking any individual Learning and Development Programmes identified in Annual Reviews) as well as undertaking on specialist roles within Haringey Council

- Assisting in the recruitment of new carers e.g Skills to Foster
- Being involved in the training of other carers e.g Leading with TSDs for new carers
- Supporting other carers – E.G mentoring, buddying, 'POD' buddying
- Providing specialist placements (Challenging teenagers, perpetrators, disabilities, mother and baby)
- Provide respite and emergency placements
- Writing reports for reviews/meetings



### Tier 3

- Supporting other carers – e.g. mentoring, buddying support
- Providing specialist placements for teenagers with challenging behaviour
- Teenager perpetrators, disabilities
- Writing reports for review meetings

