

# Kent Fostering Payments Policy

## Integrated Children's Services

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Version	3
Approved	Pending (awaiting key decision)
Date	February 2025
Review Date	February 2026

## Version Control

Version No	Date Issued	Summary of changes	Author
2	10.09.20	Integration of 2017 'Disability Placement Supplement' information.	Maria Cordrey
3		Language change from connected person to kinship foster carer. Addition of UAM E Bed & Mockingbird Hub Home Carer. Change to description of relief carer to reflect change in practice. Addition of Adoption Hospitality Allowance. Change to description of how mileage is claimed. Removal of payments table – link to Fostering website	Maria Cordrey

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## Introduction

The aim of the Kent Fostering Payments Policy is to provide clear guidance about the range of fees and entitlements paid to in house foster carers.

The policy sets out the framework of payments for specific fostering schemes and enhancements paid to reward foster carers for their skills and professional development. It clarifies all of Kent County Councils rates and payments within one document, that can be published to support our recruitment and retention of foster carers in Kent.

The policy should be read in conjunction with the Fostering Payments Table at <https://www.kentfostering.co.uk/how-to-foster/payments>.

## Legal Framework

The Children Act (1989) Guidance and Regulations Vol 4 Fostering Services and Fostering National Minimum Standards (2011) outline the requirement for a Fostering Agency to have a policy regarding foster carer payments. The Fostering National Minimum Allowance (also known as maintenance) is agreed in line with the Department of Education set guidance on the minimum amount a Fostering Agency should pay for each child placed within a foster home.

## Types of Foster Carers

A foster carer is a person who is approved under the Fostering Service Regulations (2011) and is suitable to foster within their terms of approval, a child or young person who the Local Authority may wish to place with them.

**Task centred Foster Carer:** A carer who looks after a child or young person for a focused period of time, while plans are considered for the child or young person to return to their birth or extended family or where the care plan is to match to an alternative permanent home. This could include children with a plan for adoption or permanency through foster care.

**Permanent Foster Carer:** A carer who has been matched with a specific child/young person or sibling group and looks after them for an extended period usually up to 18 years and beyond.

**Kinship Foster Carer:** A relative, friend or another person connected with a child or young person in care, who is approved as a foster carer either temporarily under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (2010) and (2013) or fully approved under The Fostering Services Regulations (2011).

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**Short Breaks Foster Carer:** A carer who provides respite care for disabled children/young people for under 75 days a year living with their birth family.

**Emergency Bed Foster Carer (E-Bed):** A carer who provides a safe home for a child/young person, 0-17 years old, for up to 10 days (15 in exceptional circumstances) who needs an immediate place of safety and when an appropriately matched placement cannot be identified.

**Unaccompanied Minor Emergency Bed Foster Carer (UASC E-Bed):** A carer who provides a safe home for a child/young person under 16 years of age who has newly arrived in Kent after escaping persecution and harassment, until they can move to a different Local Authority's care under the National Transfer Scheme.

**Parent & Child Foster Carer:** A carer who provides a home to a parent and child, role modelling, supporting, guiding and contributing to an assessment of parenting capacity.

**Mockingbird Hub Home Carer:** A carer who supports between 6-10 specific foster carers, known as 'Satellite Carers', within a group known as a 'Constellation'.

**Relief Carer:** A significant family or friend who knows the child/young person in placement well and who has been specifically assessed and agreed to look after the child/young person either in the main foster carers home or their own home.

**Sessional Foster Carer:** An approved foster carer who provides skilled, purposeful, time limited support to a child or another foster carer and receives an agreed hourly rate for a specific piece of work. This may include emergency support to improve placement stability e.g. when a young person is excluded from school.

**Day Care:** A foster carer who provides agreed support to fostering families to enable them to attend training or manage an emergency, when there is no other suitable person within the foster carers network to support (i.e. nominated babysitter).

**Shared Care:** A foster carer who provides part time care to a child/young person who may be living elsewhere (i.e. family home, residential home, boarding school).

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## The Payment Scheme

### Standard

**Fostering Maintenance:** All foster carers are entitled to an allowance for every week a child is in their care and this is based on the child's age. Kent County Council pay above the Department of Education suggested guidance for allowances. The maintenance covers direct expenditure for the child such as clothing, pocket money and savings. A proportion covers additional household costs such as furniture and furnishings, utilities and insurance. There is an element built into the maintenance to cover birthdays, Christmas, religious holidays and festivals as well as annual holidays. There are no one off payments for additional maintenance costs.

In accordance with Delegated Authority foster carers have the discretion to manage the maintenance payment 'as any reasonable parent would do', however discussion and agreement at Placement Planning/Arrangements Meetings in respect of how young people can be supported from the maintenance payment to develop their independent living and budgeting skills, is recommended (i.e. clothing allowance, mobile phones etc).

**Fostering Reward:** The Fostering Reward is paid in addition to the Fostering Maintenance and recognises the professional skills and training of the foster carer(s).

Kent Fostering Service recognise foster carers skills and experience through a Payment for Skills scheme which evaluates the foster carers skills against a set criteria. The Payment for Skills Framework has three levels to acknowledge and reward the experience and competencies demonstrated by foster carers through their annual review. A foster carers skills level is assessed either at the point of approval for experienced carers transferring to Kent Fostering or through the annual review process. The decision is made by a nominated Decision Maker following recommendation by the Fostering Panel or Payment for Skills Panel. There are three levels of payment, determined by the 'Payment for Skills' criteria.

**Foundation (Level 1)** The carer(s) receive(s) standard fostering reward payment per week per child placed and the standard 14 days holiday entitlement.

**Skilled (Level 2)** A Skilled Level carer receives an increased reward payment per week, per child placed, plus two additional days holiday for a period of one year following an appropriately evidenced Annual Review.

**Advanced (Level 3)** An Advanced Level carer receives a higher increased reward payment per week, per child placed, plus two additional days holiday for a period of 1 year following an appropriately evidenced annual review.

### Enhanced Payments for specific children/young people

**Solo Placement Payment:** Foster carers who look after a child who, as a result of risk to other children is identified as having to live within a foster placement without any other children and young people within the home.

**Complex Placement Payment:** This is for foster carers who look after a child or young person who present with a higher level of risk to both themselves and others. For example, this will include children who have complex behavioural and emotional needs, significantly disrupted attachments and ongoing challenging behaviour. Foster carers who look after a child or young person with the highest level of needs will require enhanced risk management approaches. A complex placement would include children stepping across from residential care or those young people on remand. They are likely to have intensive interventions to manage theirs and others safety and a multi-agency approach to their care with support from youth justice, mental health, therapeutic or counselling services.

All Solo and Complex payments relate to the child's needs and **not** the foster carer's skills or experience. Within the placement plan request there must be a written assessment of the child's needs which assists in identifying why the child/young person meets the criteria for a solo or complex placement and in the matching discussion how the foster carer(s) would meet those needs. If the placement is required in an emergency, a funding agreement will be sought from the relevant Assistant Director and for a planned placement, the funding decision will be sought through the Access to Resources Panel.

All Solo and Complex payments will be reviewed 3 monthly through the Access to Resource Panel. If following Panel, a recommendation is made that a child/young person no longer meets the criteria for a Solo or Complex payment the reasons should be clearly recorded. If there is a disagreement with the decision this should be escalated to the Head of Fostering.

All approved Solo and Complex Placements will receive double the Reward Payment and appropriate age-related maintenance.

### Disability Payments

**Standard and Enhanced Disability Payment:** Foster carers of children who are open to the Strengthening Independence Service receive either a Standard (linked to the low and middle rate Disability Living Allowance) or Enhanced Disability

Payment (linked to the high rate Disability Living Allowance) in addition to the Maintenance and Reward for a child.

**Disability placement supplement:** There are also a small number of children open to those teams whose level of complex needs place additional and exceptional demands on their foster carers. Children's complex needs may include:

- Waking nights where the carer has regularly disturbed sleep patterns due to the child requiring attention
- High level of mobility and/or manual handling needs
- High level of medical need that requires specialist training
- High level of feeding difficulties that requires specialist training
- High levels of supervision and/or 2 to 1 care within and/or outside of the home
- End of life care
- Behaviour that is challenging/aggressive that requires two adult carers to ensure the child's safety

Those children who present with at least two of these difficulties at any one time and whose circumstances are agreed as being exceptional by the Strengthening Independence Service Decision Making Panel may attract the Disability Placement Supplement. The Disability Placement Supplement will be equivalent in amount to the age-related reward element of the fostering fee (which is subject to annual payment uplift). This would be paid in addition to the payment for Maintenance, Reward, Payment for Skills, Standard or Enhanced Disability Payment.

The Standard and Enhanced Disability payments and the Disability Placement Supplement relate to the child's needs and **not** the foster carer's skills or experience. Within the placement plan request there must be a written assessment of the child's needs which assists in identifying why the child/young person meets the criteria for the Standard or Enhanced Disability Payment and (if applicable) the Disability Placement Supplement, and in the matching discussion how the foster carer(s) would meet those needs. If the placement is required in an emergency, a funding agreement will be sought from the relevant Assistant Director and for a planned placement the funding decision will be sought through the Strengthening Independence Service Decision-Making Panel.

The Standard and Enhanced Disability Payment and the Disability Placement Supplement (if applicable) is reviewed annually at the Child in Care Review by the IRO. If the recommendation of the Review is that the Standard or Enhanced Disability Payments should change or the Disability Placement Supplement is no

longer required, clear reasons must be recorded in the Review minutes. Payments to the carer should not stop until the recommendation has gone back through the Strengthening Independence Service Decision-Making Panel. This is to avoid a sudden and unfair reduction in the carer's income and to ensure an accountable process.

Each area is responsible for the monitoring of their use of the Disability Placement Supplement.

### **Short Breaks Payments**

In addition to the age-related maintenance and disability enhancement for a child/young person, short breaks carers receive the highest reward payment regardless of a child/young person's age on a pro rata basis.

### **Emergency Bed Payments**

Foster carers receive a retainer payment for six weeks on rota regardless of having a child/young person in placement, to hold the bed open and be ready for emergencies 24 hours a day. They also receive the retainer payment for the two weeks off rota. Emergency Bed foster carers, work to a rota of 6 weeks on, 2 weeks off.

**Additional Payments** Reward and Maintenance, when a child is placed will be paid at the higher rate regardless of the age of the child. This will be paid as a daily rate and according to the period that the child or young person is in placement. As soon as the child leaves placement the daily payments cease.

**Complex needs enhanced payment:** Emergency Bed foster carers are requested at times to provide a placement for children or young people whose care plan requires a more specialised environment to meet their holistic needs (i.e. residential care). When such placements are required it is recognised that foster carers are managing a significantly higher level of risk and this will be rewarded with a complex need enhanced payment.

Foster carers who provide an Emergency Bed provision will also receive their Skill Level payment as additional to the identified payments listed.

**Holiday payment:** Foster carer(s) are entitled to two weeks holiday payment in addition to their rota pattern.

**Day Care:** The foster carer can receive six hours day care per month to assist with professional development.

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## **UASC Emergency Bed Payments**

Foster carers providing care to children under the unaccompanied minor emergency bed scheme receive a retainer payment per week per available bed regardless of having a child in placement, to hold the bed open and be ready for emergencies. The only exception to this is when the carer takes their holiday allowance, they then would not be paid the retainer.

Reward and Maintenance when a child is placed will be paid at the higher rate regardless of the age of the child. This will be paid as a daily rate and according to the period that the child is in placement. As soon as the child leaves placement the daily payments cease.

The assessed and agreed Skills Level payment will be paid to carers in addition to the above.

A one-off emergency payment of £100 will be paid to the foster carers with their first payment for a newly arrived unaccompanied child to help pay for essential clothing and toiletries. A deduction of £10 per week per child placed under the scheme will then be taken from the carer's maintenance and around the child's second week of placement. However, under this scheme, because children should transfer out quite quickly it's likely that very little of this would be reclaimed because when the child moves on the carer's maintenance stops and the child would be taking all those essentials with them.

## **Parent & Child Payments**

There are two tiers of payment for parent and child fostering arrangements as follows:

Standard (focus on parenting support and guidance for arrangements where neither parent nor child are Looked After or where parent is Looked After and child is not).

Enhanced (focus on parenting assessment for arrangements where the parent is not Looked After and the child is or where both parent and child are looked after).

These payments reflect the living costs of parent and child living as part of the fostering household, alongside the impact of having another adult living as part of the foster family unit. The enhanced payment reflects the additional complexities and assessment required in these types of arrangements and the knowledge, skills and expertise required of the carer(s), usually where a child's welfare and safety are being considered by the court.

## ***Additional financial considerations***

**Parent's benefits:** In the majority of parent and child fostering arrangements the parent will be in receipt of benefits and they are expected to use those benefits to provide for themselves and their child (clothing, nappies, formula/food etc). This is an essential part of any arrangement because parents need to be given the opportunity to demonstrate their budgeting skills and ability to place their child's needs above their own.

Although the level of benefits may differ depending on the individual circumstances of the parent, for those receiving benefits and living with foster carers in receipt of the enhanced parent and child payment, a reduction in the foster carers maintenance fee equivalent to the income support personal allowance for a lone parent over 18, will be made.

Should a parent not be in receipt of benefits, discussion and agreement needs to be reached at the Placement Arrangements Meeting (at the latest) about how the foster carer will support the parent to finance looking after themselves and their child and how monies will be spent, while a benefit claim is made. Foster carers will be expected to finance this from their maintenance for the child equivalent to the Income Support personal allowance for a lone parent over 18.

Holiday payment: Foster carer(s) in receipt of the enhanced parent and child payment, are entitled to an additional two weeks holiday payment at the end of each arrangement of 12 weeks or more.

Day Care: The foster carer can receive eight hours day care per week for the parent and child they are looking after for the duration of the arrangement.

## **The Fostering Network Mockingbird Hub Home Carer Payments**

### **Payment for the Hub Home Carer/s**

This weekly rate will increase on 1<sup>st</sup> April each year in line with Kent County Council uplifts to fostering payments. This payment is a combination of:

- the equivalent of maintenance for a child aged 16-18 years which is to cover the cost of nominal utilities, insurance, food and drink when children are sleeping over/spending time in the home, training and support including refreshments for the satellite families at these events, Christmas and birthday presents for the children in the constellation and some social activities.
- The equivalent of the higher level reward payment rate (normally paid for children aged 9 -18 years)
- The equivalent of the enhanced disability rate.

The Hub Home Carer/s will not receive payment for skills because this is paid per child looked after and it is not the role of the Hub Home Carer/s to provide 'placements', plus the weekly payment above already includes additional monies to reflect the demands of the role and the skills of the Hub Home Carer/s.

An additional payment of £100 per month will be paid to the Hub Home Carer/s to supplement the above social activities for the constellation. This can be used flexibly (i.e. some months less may be spent on a simpler activity to contribute to a more expensive activity another month).

Mileage can be claimed in line with the current policy and procedure for all Kent foster carers.

As above, should it be agreed that in exceptional circumstances that the Hub Home Carer/s provide additional nights care to children in the constellation over and above the two-night sleepover, the carer/s would be paid for the additional nights' pro rata the age related maintenance and reward for the child who stays.

### **Kinship Foster Carer Payments**

Kinship foster carers including temporary approval under Regulation 24 receive the age-related maintenance payment for the child/young person in their care. Should they successfully complete the Skills to Foster pre panel training and undertake to complete the Training Support and Development Standards (TSDS) within the first 18 months of approval and all other expectations of a mainstream foster carer, they will also receive the Reward payment. The Reward payment can start on completion of the 'Skills to Foster' Pre-Panel training.

### **Sessional Foster Carer Payments**

Foster carers who are identified as having the relevant skills, knowledge and experience to assist other foster carers and/or children/young people with focussed pieces of work are paid a sessional rate. This could include specific work to improve placement stability at times of crisis.

### **Day Care**

Foster carers who are identified as having the capacity and availability to support a child or carer with day care provision will receive payment at an hourly rate. This can be used between foster carers to support attendance at training, support groups or social events.

## **Shared Care**

The carers will receive the full weeks age related Maintenance and Reward payments when the child/young person is in their care for two nights or more. This may include children on a rehabilitation home, those in a residential or boarding school or who require care during holidays or weekends.

## **Mileage**

Foster carers can claim on a monthly basis for mileage related to the specific needs of the child as detailed in the child's plan. The mileage is calculated on a daily basis with the first 10% of the daily maintenance rate for the child they are claiming for, being deducted off each day they make a claim. Therefore due to how these claims are processed, carers should only claim mileage for a particular day if the distance they have travelled exceeds the 10% maintenance threshold. This is because any deductions applied by finance will be taken away from the final mileage claim. This means that based on the maintenance payment a carer receives for a child/young person, there is a minimum number of miles that should be undertaken before any claim for any particular day is submitted. These mileage thresholds can be seen in our Travel and Expenses Claim Process document within our Fostering Handbook.

## **Holiday Payment**

Foster carers are entitled to between 14 and 16 night holiday payment per year depending on their Payment for Skills Level.

## **Respite Care**

If the child/young person is going to an approved foster carer for stays of between one and four nights both the mainstream carer and respite carer will receive the age-related reward and maintenance payment for the child/young person. Any additional payments (e.g. enhancements) will continue to the main carer. For any respite stays of five nights or more the main carer will receive the reward payment only.

## **Relief Care**

The relief carers will receive the reward payment only as the maintenance payment remains with the main carer to continue to provide for the children's needs within the foster home.

## **Adoption Hospitality Allowance**

Payment of £25 per day will be given to foster carers who are moving a child on for adoption, to provide meals for the adoptive family as part of the agreed introductions plan. Foster carers must complete the claim form available on the Foster Carers Handbook and submit to their Fostering Social Worker for approval before any monies can be paid.

## **Advanced Payment**

In exceptional circumstances a foster carer can receive an advanced payment of up to £100 per child at the time a placement commences, for example in an emergency when a child/young person is placed with no belongings.

## **Overpayments**

All overpayments will be recovered in full except in exceptional circumstances. Foster carers should check their payments into their account and remittance advice every time to ensure that they are correct. In the event of an overpayment they should contact their fostering social worker or Foster Payments.

## **Insurance**

Foster carers should have in place home and business insurance which covers their work as a foster carer and the children/young people they look after. The Fostering Network recommends that carers ask their insurance company for written confirmation that they have included foster children on their policy. If the foster carer's home is damaged or loss is suffered as a result of fostering which is not covered by the carers insurance then some compensation may be available through Kent County Council.

## **Benefits and Tax Credits**

Please contact HMRC for advice or on-line at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) or <https://www.gov.uk/foster-carers/claiming-benefits-while-fostering>

Information regarding benefits is also available from the Fostering Network website: <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/advice-information/finances/claiming-benefits> and Foster Talk <https://www.fostertalk.org/legal-finance/accountancy-tax-advice/social-security-benefits>

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## Kent Foster Carer Payment Rates

Foster payment rates can be found at [Fostering payments - Kent Fostering](#)