



# Kent Fostering Payments Policy

## Integrated Children's Services

Document Author	Maria Cordrey, Fostering Recruitment, Assessment & Panels Team Manager
Document Owner	Nicola Anthony, Head of Fostering East and Mark Vening, Head of Fostering Service West
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## 1. 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>.

## 2. 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 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 fostering placement.

## 3. 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 centered 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.

**Connected Person's 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).

**Short Breaks Foster Carer:** A carer who provides respite care for 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.

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

**Hub Family Foster Carer:** A carer who is linked with up to three children living with other foster carers, to provide extra support and stability to the child/young person's main foster placement.

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

**Sessional Foster Carer:** A registered Foster Carer who provides skilled, purposeful, time limited support to a child or foster carer and receives an 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 support to fostering families to enable them to attend training, emergency appointments or to have a short break during the day or evening to attend a social event.

**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, boarding school).

#### 4. 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, to reflect that an amount of the allowance is to cover holidays and birthday/Christmas presents for the child. There are no one off payments for additional maintenance costs.

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. 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 Agency 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.

## 5. Enhanced Payments for specific children/young people

*(This replaces the current Single Supplement Payment)*

**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 down 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 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.

## **6. Disability Payments**

Foster carers of children who are open to the Disabled Children's Service or Sensory Loss Team receive either a Standard or Enhanced Disability Payment in addition to the Maintenance and Reward for a child. There will be an assessment by the child's social worker to determine the level of the child's needs, presented to the funding panel and the enhancement rate will be reviewed on a yearly basis.

## **7. 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.

## **8. 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.

## 9. 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 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.

#### **10. Hub Family Payments**

Foster Carers will receive a guaranteed payment of the Maintenance and Reward at the higher rate equivalent to one child to cover the support provided to other foster families. They will also receive one planned day off a week and one planned weekend off a month when they do not have to be available to the foster carers and children they are linked with. Foster carer(s) are entitled to two weeks holiday payment in addition to their rota pattern.

#### **11. Connected Persons Payments**

Connected Persons 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.

#### **12. 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.

#### **13. 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.

#### **14. 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.



**15. 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 first 10% is deducted as this is included in the Foster Carers maintenance payment.

**16. Holiday Payment**

Foster Carers are entitled to two weeks' holiday payment per year.

**17. 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.

**18. 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.

**19. 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.

**20. Overpayment**

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

**21. 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 Carers home is damaged or loss is suffered as a result of fostering which is not covered by the carers insurance some compensation may be available through Kent County Council.

## **22. 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>

