

# Swindon Borough Council Fostering Service Foster Carers Finance Handbook 2024-2025 (updated January 2025)



## Foster Carers Finance Handbook

### Introduction

Being a foster carer affects finances in many ways and not just through the basic fostering allowances. An excellent reference book on financial matters is “Benefits”, information for Foster carers “income tax and National insurance” and Legal “expenses” information which is produced by the Fostering Network, and we recommend that carers make full use of these books,.

All carers who are members of the Fostering Network should receive a copy of these books as part of their introductory pack. Swindon Borough Council pays for membership of Fostering Network for all its approved foster carers, which includes connected persons foster carers.

This handbook clarifies our expectations of what the allowance is to cover. It is acknowledged that the actual distribution of expenditure will vary somewhat from one placement to another and from one set of carers to another to reflect individual situations and needs.

Children should also exercise choice and independence in the clothes and personal items they buy and have these needs met, within the context of the foster family's decision-making and the reasonable limits that a responsible parent would set.

A child or young person's personal allowance will be set appropriate to their age and understanding at the placement-planning meeting.

All elements of this handbook are to be reviewed each January with the Service Manager and the Team Manager covering the Fostering Services. Any increases or changes recommended will be submitted to the Children's Senior Management Team Meeting (CSMT) for sign off. Once this has occurred all foster carers will receive a letter with a copy of the updated handbook, responsibility for this task lies with the Team Manager of the Fostering Services. The officers of the Foster Care Association can escalate to the Director of Children's Social Work if this is not achieved. An escalation policy for the Foster Care Association is being developed.

By definition this document does not cover Special Guardianship, Child Arrangement Order or Adoption allowances.

All payments to foster carers are processed by the Fostering Team. The Fostering service aims to ensure that foster carers receive payments every two weeks for children placed in their care.

## **National Minimum Standards of the Fostering Service**

### **Standard 28 – Payment to Carers**

Underpinning legislation:

Regulation 17 - Support, information and training for foster parents

Regulation 27 – Approval of foster parents

Schedule 5 – Matters and obligations in foster care agreements.

#### **Standard**

- 28.1 Each foster carer receives at least the national minimum allowance for the child, plus any necessary agreed expenses for the care, education and reasonable leisure interests of the child or young person, including insurance, holiday, birthdays, school trips, religious festivals, etc., which cover the full cost of caring for each child placed with him/her.

The fostering service advises foster carers of financial and other support available to foster carers where a child remains with them after they reach the age of 18 years or where they care for a parent/s and child.

- 28.5 There is a clear and transparent written policy on payments made to foster carers. This sets out the criteria for calculating payments and distinguishes between the allowance paid and any fee paid. This policy also includes clarification of the payment of allowances and any fee paid during a break in placement or should the fostering household be subject to an allegation.
- 28.6 The written policy and the current level of payment are provided annually to each foster carer and commissioners of the service. The foster carer will receive clear information about the allowances and expenses payable.
- 28.7 Criteria for calculating fees and allowances are applied equally to all foster carers, whether the foster carer is related to the child or unrelated, or the placement is short or long term. .
- 28.9 When a child is eligible for benefits as a result of their disability, foster carers are encouraged to apply for those benefits on behalf of the child. There should be regular discussions which are recorded on case files between the child's SW and the SSW about how any additional benefits are being spent to promote the best interests of the child.

Swindon Borough Council ensure that all foster carers receive above the national minimum fostering allowance outlined by the Department of Education.

### **Payments to Foster Carers**

Payments will be made directly into the carer's Bank or Building Society Account and are made on a fortnightly basis one week in arrears and one week in advance.

At the time of approval, carers will be asked to complete a form to authorise Swindon Borough Council to make payments into their Bank or Building Society Account.

**Foster Carer Skill Progression Scheme** - Foster care has changed over time. The demands made of foster carers has meant that some primary carers are required to be at home to offer high levels of support to children. Carers who are in employment are required to be flexible to ensure that they are available to meet the needs of the children in their care. This includes being available to take and collect them from school.

All foster carers must have an Annual Review undertaken by the Fostering Service as directed by the Fostering Services Regulations 2011. Swindon employs an Independent Fostering Reviewing Officer who chairs the Review forwarding the documents to the Agency Decision Maker or the Foster Care Panel once the foster carers have had the opportunity to read the review report.

The Annual Review is the time when the foster carer(s) can request to move up to the next Skills Level as long as they can evidence that they have met the criteria for the requested Skill Level payment. If at the Review the foster carer(s) have not completed all the tasks and therefore cannot move up a Skills Level, they will be able to move up when they have completed the Action Plan, which is part of the Annual Review. The Team Manager in this instance can make the decision to move the carer to the next Skill Level without waiting for the next Annual Review when evidence is provided that the Action Plan has been met. The Team Manager must make a note on the foster carers system file and send a letter to the foster carer advising the date at which the new payment will commence. It must be noted that Skill Level payments will not be backdated, but will take effect from the date the foster carer can evidence that their Action Plan has been completed.

Foster carers are advised that their skill level payment is an agreement between themselves and the Local Authority and should not be discussed with any other foster carer or the Foster Care Association. The criteria for moving up to the next Skills Level, is dependent on the carer achieving the outcomes for each level.

Attending training events, putting the learning into practice, and demonstrating the impact this has had upon the care of children placed with foster carers.

If a foster carer has not completed or maintained the appropriate training or tasks attributed to their Skill Level, then they will be moved down a Level if they do not complete the Action Plan within a reasonable timescale recommended by the Independent Fostering Reviewing Officer and endorsed by the Agency Decision Maker.

### **Skill Level Payments**

**Level 1** - Fostering allowance and Skills Level 1 payment

£108 per week per child on approval.

This will apply to respite carers (those approved specifically and only for respite care) or who are new to fostering.

**Level Two** - £130 per week per child

Appendix with criteria to follow

**Level Three** - £185 per week per child

Appendix with criteria to follow

**Parent & Child Placement** - £300 per person per week plus Skill Level payment.

Carers must be able to demonstrate that they have the knowledge, skills and values outlined in the Fostering Coram BAAF assessment and that they adequately meet all requirements; for parent and child placements

### **Basic Fostering Allowance**

Age	Weekly
0-17 years	£300

**Breakdown of foster care allowance:**

**Complex needs additional payments to foster carers**

In August 2023 we introduced a complex fee element relating to the complexity of the child's needs. This has been introduced in recognition of the increasing complexity of needs of some of the children we care for, with the hope that the introduction of a complex fee and additional training/ support for carers will enable them to consider offering care for children they may not have been able to consider previously. It is important to recognise that all children in our care are likely to have complex needs as a result of trauma and their childhood experiences. The complex needs payments aim to support carers of our children and young people with the most complex needs.

A judgement in relation to 'frequency, risk and impact' will be required to determine whether the additional fee is applicable. An assessment will be undertaken by the supervising social worker at the matching stage in relation to the current presenting complexity of the child's needs. The complex needs assessment form will be completed in conjunction with the child's social worker and will be shared with senior managers for a decision. When a complex fee is agreed, it will be reviewed on a six monthly basis (unless there is a significant change in circumstance sooner). In circumstances where foster carers have made significant changes that impact on their income (in order to care for a child with complex needs), a period of adjustment will be taken into account in decision making.

Enhanced payments will also apply in respite arrangements where they apply in the child's main foster home.



## **Pocket Money**

Pocket money should be provided to children and young people, which is their spending money for holidays, trips, comics, sweets etc. Pocket money must not be used to cover the purchase of personal care items or toiletries. Foster carers should encourage children to save an element of their pocket money towards their spending money for holidays and such like.

Pocket money guidelines are:

0-4 years	£1.50 - £2.00
5-7 years	£2.00 – £3.50
7-10 years	£3.50 - £5.00
11–14 years	£7.00 - £10.00
14-16 years	£10.00 - £15:00

Allowances for 16+ should be agreed with the young person's social worker as this may include the clothing and toiletries part of the fostering allowance paid to foster carers. This may form part of the transition plan towards independent living.

## **Clothing and footwear**

Children should be clothed appropriate for all seasons and as a rule, an amount of £20 - £35 per week should be allocated from the fostering allowance towards clothing. All clothing should be packed in a suitcase and equip them for 7days as a minimum. When they are moving on.

## **Food**

A healthy and varied diet is an essential component of good care and an allowance of £30-£50 should be allocated per week to provide quality fresh food and to assist you to provide for any other dietary needs a child or young person may have.

## **Personal Care and Equipment**

An allowance of £10 per week is suggested for the purchase of toiletries and items necessary to promote the development of self-esteem and good personal hygiene.

## **Mobile Phones**

An allowance up to £10 per week to be paid from the fostering allowance to 'top-up' the child/young person's mobile phone. Foster carers are advised not to add children

to their own plans as in the event that the placement discontinues for any reason the fostering service will not cover this cost.

### **Suitcases/holdalls**

Upon a child being placed, the foster carer must ensure the child has sufficient suitcases or holdalls to use should they go on holiday with school or with family or friends, or in the unexpected disruption of their placement.

Under no circumstances should foster carers use plastic/rubbish bags

when moving children. This may result in an immediate suspension without payment pending a Foster Care Review. This could result in a recommendation for de-registration to be presented to the Foster Care Panel.

### **Mileage costs**

Included in the fostering allowance for each child/young person is a transport allowance equivalent to 100 miles per week.

Any additional mileage must be discussed and noted at the Placement Planning Meeting or subsequent meetings. Additional mileage agreed will be paid at £0.40 ppm upon completion of a mileage claim form. This must be completed each month and submitted for payment via the foster carers Supervising Social Worker. Claims will not be backdated for more than three months.(appendix 4)

### **Optician expenses**

The foster care allowance covers the first £50 per annum of purchasing or replacing glasses/contact lenses in each financial year. Expenditure in excess of this may be reclaimed on request via the foster carers Supervising Social Worker.

### **School holidays and trips**

Carers are expected to pay for any school trips up to £30 per term from their allowance. Costs over and above this may be claimed via the Childrens social worker with support from the supervising Social worker.

For longer trips/ holidays a discussion needs to take place between the Supervising Social Worker and the Child's Social Worker to decide on the appropriateness of the trip. If it is felt to be in the child's best interests, in the first instance the school should be approached to provide funding from the pupil premium. Or the cost may be



shared between education and Social care. In some cases, it may be appropriate for children to be asked to make a small contribution

Any payment needs to be agreed by the Fostering Team Manager/Social work team manager for approval. Costs over £500 need to be agreed at the Care and Resource Panel. Children's Services Social Work Teams will purchase a passport and birth certificate for all children and young people. This will provide two forms of identification as well as a travel document. Both of these items can also assist young people with opening bank/savings accounts and provide identification when young people are moving towards independence.

### **Leisure activities**

The foster care allowance includes the additional costs foster carers incur over and above looking after children in their own homes. Carers are expected to pay for up to two activities a week.

Carers will need to budget for membership of clubs, such as Brownies, Guides, Scouts, drama and youth clubs and the basic equipment or uniform required. Carers should also plan for expenditure on other activities such as music, dance, swimming, and horse riding or cycling. However, if it looks as if there may be a major expenditure, such as buying a musical instrument and lessons, this should be discussed with the child's social worker and the supervising social worker.

### **School photographs**

The fostering allowance includes the cost of an annual set of standard school photographs. If further sets of photographs are needed, this should be discussed with the Supervising Social Worker..

### **Family Time**

Foster carers are not required to fund activities for children's families. This would only be expected for the child who is in their care. For supervised family time, carers do not need to send food/snacks for the children. However, if a baby is having family time, the foster carer is required to provide nappies, milk etc., as it is important that the baby maintains its usual routine.

### **Additional Payments**

#### **School Prom**

A one-off payment of up to £100 will be paid upon request to be used for clothing in order for a young person to attend their school prom.

### **Emergency clothing allowance**

This is available when a child/young person first enters foster care and does not have adequate clothing. While it is not easy to identify what adequate is, the following can be used as a guide:

- Babies; 9 outfits (baby grow, pyjamas etc.), 6 vests, 1 outdoor suit, 7 sets of underwear & socks
- Pre-school children: 2 sets of nightwear & dressing gown & slippers, Footwear – shoes, trainers, Wellington boots, Coat, 4 sets of everyday clothes
- School age children: As pre-school children, and school uniform (as identified by school) or 2 sets of school clothes

Where a child coming into care does not have at least the above clothing requirements, an initial clothing grant will be provided up to an age-related maximum. This will be agreed in discussion with the Supervising Social worker.

Receipts will be required to be submitted as proof of purchase. The full amount of the allowance will not automatically be paid this will be dependent on the child's clothing needs.

The maximum allowance is as follows;

0 - 4 - £200.00  
5 -10 - £220.00  
11-15 - £260.00  
16-17 - £330.00

### **School Uniform**

This allowance can be claimed when a child/young person either starts a new school or changes school. The cost of the uniform can be claimed up to a maximum amount (see below). It is envisaged that the full allowance will not be claimed for primary school children as their uniform can be purchased at a relatively small cost. In

exceptional circumstances if the secondary school uniform costs in excess of this amount, consideration may be given to making an additional payment. This will need to be agreed prior to payment.

- On starting or changing primary school £130.00
- On starting secondary school £300.00
- On changing secondary school, £250.00
- Starting work/college allowance, £300.00

This allowance can be claimed to enable a young person to buy suitable clothing for work/college, either at the age of 16 or 18. An allowance may also be claimed to cover the cost of special clothing or equipment required for work experience.

Receipts will be required to be submitted as proof of purchase

## **Dinner money**

Children's school/College dinner money or the cost of packed lunch should be paid from the foster care allowance.

Children and young people placed with foster carers are not eligible for free school meals. If a child is receiving free school meals when placed with in foster care, the child's social worker should be asked to inform the school.

## **Name/birth day, festival and holiday allowances**

Foster carers can receive up to an additional four weeks fostering allowance each year. The birthday and festival allowance will be paid automatically into your bank accounts prior to the appropriate dates for the children in your care.

The payments are paid as follows:

Name day – one weeks fostering allowance

Festival payment – one weeks fostering allowance paid in early December. An alternative date can be requested if this reflects their celebrated festival.

Holiday allowance – two weeks fostering allowance paid. There is no fixed date for this as foster carers can take holidays at different times of the year. This payment is made on the understanding that the carer uses this to pay for a holiday or for day trips and activities and holiday fun. A carer can claim two weeks for the number of children that they are approved for so if approved for two children they can claim for 4 weeks a year

(A reminder that holidays cannot be taken during term time)

The claim form for these allowances is included at the end of this Handbook as Appendix 2.

## **Retainer payments**

Where a foster carer has committed to caring for a child who is not yet placed e.g. due to pending court proceedings or a long-term match has been identified and introductions are commencing, the foster carer will receive 50% of the age-related fostering allowance on a pro rata basis until the child is placed. The retainer will be paid from the date that the placement has been formally agreed. The full fostering allowance and any skills level fee will be paid from the date that child is placed.

## **Sessional (ad hoc) payments**

- 1. Assisting with recruiting and training foster carers:** Foster carers can assist greatly in the recruitment of foster carers, supporting existing carers through a buddy or mentoring scheme, co-facilitating training such as Skills to Foster and other training which may take place over a number of days. In recognition of the work foster carers undertake including preparation for training events, a sessional rate of £10.00 per hour will be paid to foster carers. A time sheet is included at the end of this Handbook as Appendix 3.
- 2. Assisting foster carers with day care:** An hourly rate of £6.00 will be paid for the provision of day care. The primary foster carer must provide a packed lunch/snacks for the child. The primary Foster carer should also cover the cost of any activities during the day care. Examples of when a foster carer can request day care:
  - Attending a funeral
  - Attending training
  - Attending recruitment activities
  - In period of illness
  - To support a placement where there is no education
  - To support placement stability

In addition to the above we are aware that there are other circumstances where foster carers would benefit from day care. If a foster carer feels they would benefit from having day care, they should discuss this with their Supervising Social Worker.

## **Allegations and complaints made against foster carers – payment of fostering fees**

In recognition of the financial hardship that may be encountered by carers while an allegation of harm or suspicion of harm, a standard of care concern or a complaint is being investigated the following apply:

When a child is removed from a Swindon Borough Council foster placement, pending the outcome of an investigation. The carers Skill Level payment will continue to be paid to the carer for a maximum of 12 weeks or until the matter is resolved, whichever concludes soonest. The same principles apply to Respite Foster Carers who will be paid pro-rata.

Fostering teams will prioritise presentation of cases where an allegation has been made, and the case will aim to be heard no later than 28 days from the conclusion of the child protection enquiry.

## **Equipment**

The fostering service will be responsible for providing a new cot mattress prior to the placement of a baby with foster carers. It is a requirement that each baby placed will have their own mattress and not one used by another child.

Due to the changes in the law around car seats the Fostering team will pay for all car seats deemed necessary for children who are cared for. Carers will be expected to keep these for use with other children

There are some circumstances where it may be possible to provide some basic equipment. This will be provided at the discretion of the Team Manager for the Fostering Service, but it is expected that replacing equipment (other than cot mattresses) is part of the expenses covered by the fostering allowance.

## **Long Term Savings – Junior ISA**

It is Swindon Borough Council's intention that all children for whom they act as corporate parents, receive a 'nest egg' when they reach 18 years. Children who are looked after for longer than 12 months have a Junior ISA set up with a Government appointed body who place £200 in the account as soon as it is opened.

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 Swindon Borough Council will pay £5.00pw into the Junior ISA for all eligible children until they reach the age of 18 years, when they are entitled to access their savings account. It is expected that carers should offer the young person advice on how to use these savings with support from their Pathway Advisor. Children must continue to receive pocket money from their foster carer as before, which can be used as required and/or saved in the short-term use. Should a child receive additional money from relatives or foster carers then this can be deposited into the Junior ISA and the form to be completed is attached as Appendix 1.

### **Respite care payments**

#### **Respite care is based on the need of the child.**

Definition: a break without foster children for approved foster carers

Swindon Borough Council recognises the demands that fostering places upon the family unit and believes that some families will need respite care i.e. a break without foster children in order to maintain long term 'forever family'. Respite care is not usually relevant for short-term placements unless they are likely to exceed one year or the effect of multiple children placed together places additional strain on the family/children placed. Respite care is for up to 14 nights per foster family in any one-year subject to the criteria being met and respite being in the best interest of the child.

The aim of respite care is to ensure the child can remain with the family; for children and young people who have particularly complex needs, whether or not this is for a defined condition i.e. autism. Respite care may be needed in these circumstances to give everyone a break, time to relax and then to come together again.

We recognise that there are some circumstances where more than 14 nights respite is needed to maintain the stability of a placement. For children who require more than 14 days' respite, approval would need to be sought from the Care and Resource Panel. With regard to short term placements, a child would not generally be placed with a foster carer due to go on holiday who could not take the child with them as this would not be viewed as being in the child's best interest. The foster carer should notify the Fostering team duty Social Worker or you're their SSW if they have a holiday booked

#### **Entitlement to respite care**



Every long-term foster carer can be considered for respite care and short-term foster carers dependent upon the length of the placement and the needs of the child/young person.

The calendar year for respite runs from 1<sup>st</sup> April – 31<sup>st</sup> March and is calculated on a pro-rata basis for the time the child/young person is in placement.

Therefore, if the child has been in placement for a year then the allowance will be up to 14 nights; if the child has been in placement for six months the allowance will be up to seven nights.

Respite cannot be carried over into the next year and relates to the length of time a child is placed in each calendar year.

The main carer will not receive the fostering allowance when a child is in respite care but will receive the skills payment for a maximum of 14 nights.

The respite carer will receive the fostering allowance and any skill payment they are entitled to.

## Tax

***N.B. There is a legal requirement that as soon as a foster carer receive a fee they must register with their local Tax Office as being self-employed regardless of their personal circumstances.***

An agreement has been made with the tax office to disregard a proportion of the fee. Fostering Network produce a useful leaflet to explain this – ‘Foster Care Allowances and Income Tax’ which a foster carer will receive as part of the pack received following approval. Each foster carer should receive an annual statement at the end of the financial year. They may find it helpful to seek independent financial advice with regard to their tax position as a foster carer.

An online tool ***Tax for Foster Carers*** was launched in autumn 2012 to help foster carers register with Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs (HMRC) as self-employed. Foster carers are classed as self-employed and as such must complete their own tax returns. The new tool will help foster carers avoid potential penalties for wrong or late tax declarations, and it also has an introduction to the ‘qualifying care relief’ tax scheme for foster carers.

## Car Insurance

The insurance cover provided by Swindon Borough Council does not cover damage to cars. Carers are expected to take out fully comprehensive car insurance which includes business use. A copy of their current car insurance must be passed to their Supervising Social Worker annually. No foster carer must drive a car without a current and valid full driving licence; foster carers with provisional licences must not transport children until they have produced a full and valid driving licence.

**N.B. Carers are advised that their car insurance is invalidated if they do not have current car tax and MOT for the vehicle and they must inform their car insurance company that they are a foster carer and transporting foster children.**

### **Household insurance**

Foster carers are expected to take out household insurance and ensure that their insurers are aware they are foster carers

### **Swindon Borough Council Insurance for Foster carers**

Swindon Borough Council insurers have agreed that foster carers are not covered by their employer's liability insurance, as foster carers are considered to be self-employed. Any claim would be made under the public liability insurance, as follows.

**Public Liability** – Insurance cover for claims arising out of injury or damage caused to a third party where negligence has been proven. This cover is extended to indemnify foster carers approved by the insured in respect of legal liability arising out of the fostering of children in care if the insured. (Insurer: Zurich Municipal – Policy: QLA-11U003-0013 (Public Liability))

**Property Damage** – Insurance cover for foster carers when damage arises due to the actions wilful or otherwise of foster children residing with the foster parent and when there is no other insurance in force in respect of damage. (Insurer: Zurich Municipal – Policy: QLA-11U003-0013 (Property Module, Part K))

### **Fostering Network Membership**

Once approved as a foster carer they will become a member of Fostering Network. Swindon Borough Council will pay the annual subscription fee and will enrol all foster carers as soon as you have become approved. This will cease when they no longer foster for Swindon Borough Council.

Membership of Fostering Network gives carers legal insurance cover for issues involving foster care and foster carers should consult their Fostering Network

membership pack for full details of this scheme. An important leaflet covering this area is the Fostering Network signpost 'Foster Care and Insurance'.

### **Overpayments**

Overpayments to the fostering allowance occur when the information on a child's movement arrives after the payment cycle has started.

When an overpayment occurs, the foster carer will be required to repay the amount overpaid, which can include negotiations with regarding how the repayments are to be made. In the event the overpayment is a small amount, the expectation would be that payment would be taken in the following payment run. Foster carers are required to notify the Fostering Team when an overpayment is made.

### **Contact points for queries**

There may be occasions when a foster carer has queries about their fostering allowance. Any queries about payment should be directed to their Supervising Social Worker in the first instance or the Assistant Team Manager in their absence.

However, it must be understood that Supervising Social Workers can only process additional costs upon authorisation from the Team Manager or equivalent.

### **Disability Living Allowance - Guidance on Payment and Use**

Disabled Living Allowance (DLA) is a benefit that can be claimed by or on behalf of anyone under 65 who needs some extra care because they have a disability. This guidance will concentrate on DLA for children.

It has two components: The Care component and the Mobility component. They can be claimed on the same application form and if successful are paid in a single sum, usually monthly.

The Care component is paid at three rates, higher, middle and lower, and the Mobility at two rates, higher and lower, depending on the level of need.

### **Criteria**

Care component: this can be paid when a child needs extra care, including supervision. There are no set criteria, except that the child must have needed this for at least three months prior to the application, therefore three months is the lower age limit, the upper being 18. For older children it continues once they reach 18 and it is not dependant on their status as children who are cared for or care experienced young people. Some examples might be:

Daytime: help or supervision with washing, dressing, bathing, eating, toileting, taking medication, physiotherapy, help with the effects of deafness or blindness. It also covers help or supervision to prevent children and young people from harming themselves or others, including where a child has no sense of danger or has complex behavioural needs.

Night-time: regular help with toileting, bedwetting, settling back down, changing clothes and bedding at night, or if you have to get up regularly to stop the harming themselves.

Mobility component: the child must be at least three years old and have some mobility difficulties. These could include:

Children who can't walk or who can't walk very far or who walk only with great difficulty because of physical or breathing problems. Where the effort of walking damages their health or where they can walk but need support and guidance, including where they have no sense of danger when out of the house. Again, children who are deaf or blind may be eligible.

### **Claiming for a Fostered Child**

Claims for children under the age of 16 must be made by an adult **When your child turns 16**

The child will need to apply for [Personal Independence Payment \(PIP\)](#) when they turn 16.

### **When they apply for PIP**

The child will receive a letter inviting them to apply for PIP. The letter will be sent:

- shortly after their 16th birthday
- when they leave hospital, if they were in hospital on their 16th birthday
- about 20 weeks before their DLA award ends, if they were awarded DLA under special rules for people who might have 12 months or less to live

**The child's DLA payments will stop unless they apply for PIP by the date given in the letter.**

If they apply by the date given in the letter, they'll continue to receive DLA until their claim is assessed.

A claim must be discussed and agreed between the child's social worker, the foster carer and their supervising social worker. Foster carers can claim on behalf of the child in their care and are often the best people to do so because they know the child best and understand exactly what they can and can't do or need help with in daily living. Foster Carers must clearly evidence where and when they have spent the DLA on behalf of a child in their care, as detailed below. This should be recorded on the foster carers diary sheets.

If the child receives DLA before coming to live with a carer, either from their home or from another foster carer, the social worker will arrange for the transfer of the benefit. Similarly, carers must comply with the social worker's arrangements if the child moves on.

Remember that DLA is paid to the child or young person. Carers and parents claim the money and administer its use but DLA is not a benefit that is paid to adults for caring for a child. It stays with the child wherever they are living. If the young person is over 16, they can have the money paid directly to them.

Note that DLA cannot be paid if a child or young person is in hospital for more than 84 days.

DLA is usually paid into a bank account. It does not affect the award of any other benefit and is not means tested. The carer's income is not a factor in the decision to award it, and it is tax-free.

The claim forms themselves can be complex. The key point to remember is to not underestimate the needs of the child. On the form, foster carers should include absolutely everything that the child is unable to do, needs help with or requires supervision for. Carers typically understate the degree of difficulty and/or the amount of help they provide.

For example, children and young people are often very strong and brave. They can walk, get in and out of bed, go to the toilet etc. but it is hard work. If they do it with difficulty, they are eligible to claim, because the criteria is not only whether or not they can undertake the basics of daily life, it also includes situations where they manage with difficulty or need help to do it.

The carer and SSW should work together on the form and if necessary consult a specialist benefits advisor.

## **Using the DLA**

The money must be spent in a way that enhances the child's life and ensures that they have exactly the same opportunities as any child or young person of a similar age. In short, anything that improves the life of the child or young person.

There are no set requirements. Rather, decisions should always be based on the needs of each individual child. Examples include:

- Costly leisure activities like horse-riding.
- Additional equipment in the home.
- Personalised equipment for the child such as a computer or software to assist communication.
- Help with personal care.
- An extra helper to assist the carer, e.g. a child sitting service, transport escort
- Extra short-breaks
- Additional costs like heating or wear and tear on clothing.

Carers must evidence how the money is spent. It is part of our responsibilities that the SSW and social worker will check this periodically, and the child's social worker must be involved in discussions about how it is being used for the benefit of the child.

Foster carers must set up a separate bank account into which the DLA is paid.

The money is not intended to be saved for the child for use in later years as this could result in them being penalised. For example, if there is more than £3000 in an account when the child returns home this could affect the benefits paid to the parents, or for a child reaching 16 a sum of more than £8000 will affect their claim for universal credit and housing element.

**The money is not expected to pay for anything that is already covered by the fostering allowance.**

### Further Reading

The Fostering Network Information Sheet for Carers on DLA:  
[http://www.fostering.net/sites/www.fostering.net/files/public/resources/resource-lists/dla\\_infosheet\\_oct07.pdf](http://www.fostering.net/sites/www.fostering.net/files/public/resources/resource-lists/dla_infosheet_oct07.pdf)

Directgov:

[http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/FinancialSupport/DG\\_10011731](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/FinancialSupport/DG_10011731)



DWP Guide:

[http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/stellent/groups/jcp/documents/websitecontent/dev\\_011817.pdf](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/stellent/groups/jcp/documents/websitecontent/dev_011817.pdf)

Signature:

Date:

## Appendix 1 - Junior ISA/Child Trust Fund Contribution Form

### Contributions to an individual account (where the account is administered by The Share Foundation)

If you would like to make a contribution to a Junior ISA or Child Trust Fund account for an individual Child who is cared for or Care Experienced Young Person please complete the following information and return this form **in all cases** to:

**The Share Foundation, Oxford House, Oxford Road, Aylesbury, Bucks. HP21 8PB**

#### Donation Details

Amount:	£
Frequency:	One-Off - Weekly - Monthly - Quarterly - Annually
Start date for regular donations:	
Name of Child:	
TSF Reference (if known)/National Insurance Number/date of birth:	

**Please enclose a cheque (payable to 'The Share Foundation') or credit The Share Foundation's account (quoting the TSF Ref/NI number/Name of child)**

Sort code: 40-08-39, Account number 23666174 (**sending the form itself by post or**

**e-mail**) for regular donations, please complete your bank account details below:

Name of Account:	
Bank/Building Society Name:	
Sort Code:	
Account Number:	

**Please sign here:** ..... **Date:** .....

**Your personal details:**

First Name:	
Surname:	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Telephone:	
Email:	

## Appendix 2: HOLIDAY ALLOWANCES

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**TO BE SENT TO:**      **FOSTERING TEAM**  
                                 **First FLOOR**  
**CLARENCE HOUSE**      **EUCLID STREET**  
                                 **SWINDON**  
                                 **SN1 2JH**

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Please pay (tick appropriate box)

☐      One week

☐      Two weeks

**Name of child/ren:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**In the payment for the fortnight ending:** \_\_\_\_\_

(In order to meet our processing deadlines, it is essential that this notification slip is received at the Finance Section by the first MONDAY morning of the payment period)

**Signed by carer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of carer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address of carer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Authorised by manager:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Appendix 3: Foster Carers Claim Form Recruitment/Training/Day Care**

This form is to be used for foster carers undertaking day care, co-facilitating training events and recruitment and any other activities requested by the Fostering Service.

<b>Name of foster carer:</b>	
<b>Address:</b>	

Date	Activity	Hours @ agreed rate	Total

I certify that I have undertaken the work stated above for the Fostering Service.

**Signature of carer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Authorised by manager (print name):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:**

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**Date:**

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**Appendix 4: Foster Carers Mileage Claim Form**

<b>Name of Carer/s</b>		<b>Period end date</b>	
<b>Name of child</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Purpose of Journey</b>	<b>Route/Destination</b>	<b>Mileage</b>

		<b>Total Mileage</b>	
<b>Deduct 100 miles per week</b>			<i>-100.00 MILES</i>
<b>TOTAL MILEAGE to be reimbursed</b>			
<b>Carers Signature</b>		<b>Supervising SW Signature</b>	