

Children, Schools and Families

PAYMENT OF ALLOWANCES SCHEME FOR FOSTER CARERS

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INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the scheme of payment of allowances to foster carers for Hertfordshire County Council Children, Schools and Families Service. The allowances are reviewed annually each April.

The document does NOT cover long term foster care where a placement started before April 1999, or shared care.

All payments to foster carers are processed by the fostering team responsible for the supervision and support of the foster carer. The family placement service aims to ensure that foster carers receive their payment without delay and that exceptional claims are treated fairly. Carers should speak to their supervising social worker about any payment request or queries. They should not ask the area team child's social worker about payments as this causes confusion and sometimes delay in payment. Where a foster carer's request for payment relates to a child's particular needs, the supervising social worker will liaise with the child's social worker about whether the payment is appropriate.

Carers should use the Hertfordshire Allowance Worksheet (Appendix 1), to demonstrate how the allowance has been used and what items of clothing or alternative items have been purchased. Pocket money, birthday and festival allowance should also be recorded on this form. This is required for audit purposes and to ensure that children and young people have received their full entitlement for each financial year, and particularly when they move between placements. (It is advisable to retain receipts for foster carer/s records).

Carer/s of young people aged sixteen and over should ensure that the young person has sufficient suitable clothing for formal/interview situations, education/training/employment opportunities, and for their future move to independent living.

The budget covers all payments that are directly made to foster carers. Any expenditure on looked after children that is not a foster parent payment remains the responsibility of the area team. If area teams are unsure who has responsibility for a particular cost, they should consult the family placement service.

PART ONE - ALLOWANCES

1. Definitions

Foster Care Allowance – weekly rate paid to foster carers (includes maintenance and clothing).

2. How and when Serco makes payments

- 2.1 New foster carers are usually paid weekly for the first 13 weeks. After this, Serco will write directly to them to advise that payments are transferring to four-weekly, in exceptional circumstances on going weekly payments can be made.
- 2.2 Serco must receive FN024 forms by Wednesday morning to be processed for payment the following week. Cheques are posted out (first class) on the following Tuesday (weekly payments). Dates of four-weekly payments are available on request.

3. Emergency Payment on Placement

- 3.1 An advance (see supplement – table 1) of the foster care allowance can be paid direct to foster carers from the area team's imprest account. Family placement service should note it on the FN024. It will be deducted from the allowance when paid.
- 3.2 The Central Placement Team will have established in advance whether this is required by individual carers. Area social workers will be advised when the placement is offered. Payment is made from the area team's imprest account and charged to the fostering budget.

4. Equipment

- 4.1 When Hertfordshire County Council newly approves a foster carer, we acknowledge that a certain amount of equipment is required in order for them to undertake the fostering task. While we do not have an unlimited budget we are prepared to fund certain equipment, if the carer does not already possess what is needed.
- 4.2 Each carer is to be allocated a set amount for what we consider to be basic equipment/furniture. If carers require something specific e.g. a more expensive item to fit in with furniture they already have we would expect them to fund the extra.
- 4.3 For carers approved to take babies we will provide up to £450 to cover the purchase of the following:
 - Cot and mattress
 - Pushchair/buggy, etc

- High chair
- Car seat
- Sterilizer unit
- Baby monitor
- Bedding

4.4 For carers approved for children aged 3 – 10 we will provide up to £350 to cover the purchase of the following:

- Bed
- Wardrobe
- Chest of drawers
- Car seat (if appropriate)
- Stairgate (if appropriate)
- Bedding

4.5 For carers approved for children aged 11+ we will also provide up to £350 to cover the purchase of the following:

- Bed
- Wardrobe
- Chest of drawers
- Desk
- Bedding
- Car Seat (if appropriate)

4.6 Carers on approval will be expected to provide a list of what equipment they need together with a breakdown of the cost per item. This should be written on a requisition form that can be obtained from the local family placement team. A claim will then be made for a cheque to be sent to the carer as soon as possible. Receipts MUST also be passed to the family placement service manager for auditing purposes.

4.7 Any extra equipment will only be provided in exceptional circumstances following discussion with the fostering team manager. This may apply for example, if carers offer more than one placement and require bunk beds.

4.8 The family placement service will be responsible for providing new cot mattresses as required, bearing in mind the recommendations that a new mattress should be provided for each new baby.

4.8.1 When a carer's approval is changed either to extend the age range or to increase the numbers they should discuss with their supervising social worker what (if any) extra equipment they need. This should be itemised and costed with a breakdown presented to the family placement team manager for approval.

4.8.2 For any extra equipment requested by carers, their supervising social worker should fill in a requisition form obtainable from the local family placement team.

5. Replacement Costs:

- 5.1 If equipment needs to be replaced due to accidents or deliberate damage by a foster child the cost will normally be met by Herts County Council or its insurers. (Separate guidance is available regarding claims).
- 5.2 For normal wear and tear fostering network advises that replacement should be met by the carer. If, however, there is excessive wear and tear due to particular circumstances, this cost may be met by the family placement service e.g. a large number of short term placements.
- 5.3 Where the child damages equipment, costs should be reclaimed through the Herts County Council insurance scheme.

Fostering Allowance Structure – 2010-2011

Hertfordshire Fostering Allowance from 1st April 2010
(Linked to National Minimum Fostering Allowance) South East Rate

Age	0-4	5-10	11-15	16-17
Rate	£123.00	£137.00	£156.00	£184.00

6. Allowances

Hertfordshire County Council foster carers receive the national minimum fostering allowance, this is paid to foster carers to cover all costs in relation to looking after children and young people, the follow pages provide guidance on their application.

Allowance and Amount	Guidance and Conditionality
Pocket Money Age Range 0-4 £4.00 5-10 £4.50 11 £5.50 12 £6.00 13 £7.00 14 £8.25 15 £10.25 16 £11.25 17 £11.25 Per week	The pocket money allowance is provided to children and young people for their general and personal needs. Foster carers with young children should use the pocket money allowance to cover the costs of activities, comics, sweets etc. The foster care pocket money rates mirror the residential pocket money rates. See Savings Section Page 4 To come out of fostering base allowance.

<p>Clothing</p> <p>Age Range</p> <p>0-4 £9.41</p> <p>5-10 £10.88</p> <p>11-15 £14.12</p> <p>16-17 £18.51</p> <p>Per week</p>	<p>The clothing allowance indicated is the minimum that can be used flexibly to purchase items directly by foster carer/s as necessary for young children and be provided to older children and young people on a weekly/monthly basis or, as required. The use of the allowance will differ between individuals and should be set out in the child's/young person's placement plan and be agreed by the foster carer/s, supervising social worker and the child's/young person's social worker and leaving care personal adviser.</p> <p>When it is assessed that the child/young person has sufficient clothing, the allowance could be used for activities, hobbies or saved for future needs. This should be agreed by the supervising social worker and the child's/young person's social worker and leaving care personal adviser</p> <p>Carers should use the Hertfordshire Clothing Allowance Worksheet (Appendix 1) to demonstrate how the allowance has been used and what items of clothing or alternative items have been purchased.</p> <p>This is required for audit purposes and to ensure that children and young people have received their full entitlement for each financial year and particularly when they move between placements (it is advisable to retain receipts for foster carer/s records). Carer/s of young people aged sixteen and over should ensure that the young person has sufficient suitable clothing for formal/interview situations, education/training/employment opportunities and for their future move to independent living.</p> <p>See Savings Section Page 9 To come out of fostering base allowance.</p>
<p>Education Variable Costs</p>	<p>Standard materials that are required for young people's school attendance and activities are provided for within the fostering allowance. If specific major items are required foster carers should contact their supervising social worker regarding payments for 'one off' educational situations.</p> <p>To come out of fostering base allowance.</p>
<p>School Photographs</p>	<p>The fostering allowance provides for the purchase of a yearly set of standard school photographs (approximately £15). If it is assessed by the foster carer/s, supervising social worker and social worker that supplementary photographs are required a 'one off' payment will be made by the fostering service.</p> <p>To come out of fostering base allowance.</p>
<p>Savings</p>	<p>As a broad principle, Hertfordshire Children, Schools and Families aims to encourage children and young people to develop a custom of saving money for their future life and needs.</p>

	<p>The Fostering Service aims to encourage all children and young people to develop this savings habit by recommending that a regular weekly amount is saved. The following amounts could be paid directly into a savings account from the fostering allowance (clothing and pocket money element) where the child/young people foster carer/s, supervising social worker, social worker and personal adviser are in agreement. The following amounts are provided as a guide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to 10 year olds £3.00 per week • 11 to 15 year olds £5.00 per week • 16 and 17 year olds £10.00 per week <p>For young children this amount could be added to their 'Child Trust Fund' and for older young people it could be used to set up a tax free savings account (I.S.A.). In which case this would be for long term savings, and cannot be withdrawn.</p> <p>Young people (16 plus) who are receiving an Education Maintenance Allowance, or a Training Allowance, Modern Apprenticeship Allowance, or wages should be encouraged to save at least their clothing and pocket money allowances.</p> <p>Savings could be used when children and young people take part in a holiday with their carers, purchase major items or saved for the future. Savings made by young people aged 16 plus could be used to supplement the leaving care 'Setting Up Home Allowance' and purchase items for independent living and contribute towards the 'Introduction to Driving' Scheme (Leaving Care Finance Policy).</p> <p>To come out of fostering base allowance</p>
Nursery Fees	<p>Nursery fees are generally included in the fostering allowance. If, as part of a child's care plan, a child needs to attend nursery for longer periods than the "average" child, an additional allowance may be claimed for the extra cost.</p> <p>To come out of fostering base allowance.</p>
Luggage	<p>The fostering allowance provides for the purchase of two items of luggage for children and young people. All young people moving to independence or between placements must have appropriate personal luggage. It is not acceptable for young people's belongings to be moved in bin liners.</p> <p>To come out of fostering base allowance.</p>
Respite Breaks	<p>Respite breaks provide important support for complex placements.</p> <p>Respite breaks are offered:</p>

<p>Payment for Respite</p>	<p>(a) Where the care plan has established the need. Details of the plans and arrangements should be recorded in the care plan and review.</p> <p>(b) In crisis situations where the carer, social worker and supervising worker agree that the respite break meets the child's and family's needs.</p> <p>(a) Respite Care: Carers who offer less than a full time placement (e.g. weekend care only) will be paid pro-rata. In exceptional circumstances the placement plan may recommend that a place be kept available full-time (e.g. children at residential schools requiring regular weekend and / or holiday care) and paid as such.</p> <p>(b) Where the child's main placement is not expected to provide clothing (e.g. weekly boarding school), the respite carer will receive the full clothing allowance (i.e. not pro-rata) and will be responsible for providing all clothing including school uniform.</p> <p>(c) The allowance (excluding clothing element) will be paid to the respite carer. The main carer is responsible for the child's clothing.</p> <p>(d) For respite periods of less than 4 days, the full allowance will be paid to the main carer.</p>
<p>Occasional care provided by relative/friends of foster carers</p>	<p>From time to time it may be appropriate (subject to the usual checks and agreement of the area team and family placement service) for a child to be looked after temporarily by a member of the carers' extended family or friend. It can only be arranged where the foster child already knows the relative or friend. Such an arrangement may be the best way to provide continuity of care for the child.</p> <p>Such an arrangement would be made either (a) as part of an agreed respite care plan for the child, or (b) to cover an unforeseen emergency (e.g. illness). In these circumstances payment would be made to the relative / friend at the kinship rate less the clothing allowance which remains the responsibility of the main carer (see tables), and payments to the main foster carer would be adjusted for stays of more than 4 days.</p> <p>In all other circumstances any care arranged is the responsibility of the foster carer to pay directly.</p> <p>A reminder for social workers – Serco must be notified on FN024 in advance of all periods of respite.</p>

Day Care Allowance	<p>Where a child is out of school during term time and requires care during the day, an allowance will be paid to the foster carers if they are providing day care. Part payment will be made at a half-day rate for any child out of school part of the day. Allowance (per child per day) £13.74</p> <p>The above rate will also be made if the child needs nursing for more than 1 week. Payments will start from the date the child started to receive nursing at home.</p> <p>Where day care has to be provided by another foster carer (e.g. child excluded from school after placement and the main carer is working) payment will be made during term time at the hourly day care rate below. Reasonable transport costs of the carer providing day care will be reimbursed.</p> <p>Hourly day care rate (per child per hour) £4.71</p> <p>Note: This allowance is not applicable for children above statutory school-leaving age or during school holidays (except in exceptional circumstances).</p> <p>Claims – the Foster Carer providing care should claim using form FN024A (Foster Carers expenses/reimbursement) on a monthly basis. The form should be sent to the Foster Carers' supervising Social Worker for authorisation.</p>
Unplanned Endings	<p>Where there is an unplanned end of placement, 1 weeks allowance will be paid, overpayments in excess of one week allowance will be deducted from the next payment.</p> <p>Where no further placement is made within 2 weeks of the ending date, an invoice for the overpayment will be issued by Serco, after consulting with the family placement team.</p>
Planned Endings	<p>Where an overpayment is made in a planned ending of a placement it will be deducted from the next placement payment.</p> <p>Where no further placement is made with that carer within 2 weeks of the ending, Serco will issue an invoice for the overpayment, after consulting with the family placement team.</p>
Overpayments	<p>If a foster carer receives a cheque for a child, which they believe to be an overpayment, they should notify their supervising social worker. Supervising social workers will discuss with Serco the correct amount to be repaid and how it will be recovered.</p>

<p>Travel Variable Costs</p> <p>The Allowance covers the first 25 miles. Transport or £20.00 per week.</p>	<p>The fostering allowance provides for the cost of travel to full time education. Foster carers should transport young people or, provide a bus pass – where they attend school in their local area and excludes taxis.</p> <p>Where appropriate, and depending on an assessment of need that takes account of age and maturity, young people should be encouraged to use local public transport and should be provided with a Hertfordshire SaverCard that provides half fare bus travel for students aged 11 to 18.</p> <p>The Hertfordshire SaverCard is £10.00 for students under 16 in full time education and for students 16-18 in full time education.</p> <p>The aim of encouraging the use of a bus pass is to assist with education, training and employment opportunities, family and social contact, leisure and cultural needs, avoiding social isolation and encouraging the development of independence skills. For young people placed outside of the Hertfordshire area a bus pass relevant to his/her locality should be provided.</p> <p>To come out of fostering base allowance.</p>														
<p>Subsequent Mileage £0. 40 per mile</p>	<p>Children, Schools and Families will provide a mileage allowance of £0.40p per mile for the first 10,000 miles and £0.25p per mile after 10,000 miles (2010-2011) for transporting young people to school, health appointments, leisure activities and family contact where the supervising social worker agrees in advance for the transportation to take place and the weekly distance travelled exceeds 25 miles. See above regarding bus passes and age and maturity.</p>														
<p>Initial clothing allowance</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>0-4</td> <td>£188.08</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5-10</td> <td>£188.08</td> </tr> <tr> <td>11-15</td> <td>£229.89</td> </tr> <tr> <td>16-17</td> <td>£291.77</td> </tr> </table>	0-4	£188.08	5-10	£188.08	11-15	£229.89	16-17	£291.77	<p>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:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;">Babies:</td> <td>9 outfits (babygrows, pyjamas etc.) 6 vests 1 outdoor suit 7 sets of underwear & socks</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;">Pre-school children:</td> <td>2 sets of nightwear & dressing gown & slippers Footwear – shoes, trainers, wellington boots Coat 4 sets of everyday clothes</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;">School age children:</td> <td>As pre-school children, and school uniform (as identified by school) or 2 sets of school clothes</td> </tr> </table> <p>Where a child coming into care does not have at least the above clothing requirements, an initial clothing grant will be provided up to</p>	Babies:	9 outfits (babygrows, 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
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	an age related maximum.								
School Uniform Allowance	<p>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 table).</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>On starting or changing primary school</td> <td>£119.96</td> </tr> <tr> <td>On starting secondary school</td> <td>£265.15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>On changing secondary school</td> <td>£222.26</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Starting work/college allowance</td> <td>£265.15</td> </tr> </table> <p>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</p>	On starting or changing primary school	£119.96	On starting secondary school	£265.15	On changing secondary school	£222.26	Starting work/college allowance	£265.15
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<p>Holiday Allowance</p> <p>0-4 £246.00 5-10 £274.00 11-15 £312.00 16-17 £368.00</p> <p>Per Year – Maximum Two Weeks Equivalent</p>	<p>The holiday allowance of £246.00 to £368.00 (depending on age) per child is provided for a major holiday of at least five days once per year. Carers will receive a holiday payment, equivalent to 2 weeks fostering allowance for each child placed, paid routinely in July for the beginning of the summer holidays for each child in placement. Carers may request their supervising social worker to arrange an earlier payment if they wish to take an earlier holiday. If this payment, together with 2/3rds of the fostering allowance, does not cover the cost (e.g. holiday's abroad) additional payment can be paid in exceptional circumstances where the holiday promotes the welfare of the child. This must be approved by the Fostering Team Manager.</p> <p>The additional payment will be up to a maximum of £175 per week for two weeks (£350 total).</p> <p>The purpose of family based care is to give the child a full experience of family life. It offers the child an opportunity to feel valued and fully participate in the life of the foster family, including family holidays. In making arrangements for family holidays please consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The need for consistency of care for the foster child/young person. (b) The view of the young person about accompanying the family. (c) The needs of the carers and their family (d) The child's education. Foster carers are actively discouraged from taking a child out of school during term time. <p>Holiday plans should be included in the placement plan and reviewed if necessary. They must always take into account the child's</p>								

	<p>education, particularly whether absence can be authorised if a term time holiday is unavoidable (for instance dictated by carer's work situation), or the timing of any SATs tests of public examinations.</p> <p>The exceptions where it might not be possible for carers to take a child on holiday could be: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Emergency placements where holiday arrangements have already been made (b) Where the care plan states the family needs a break apart from the child (this would also be in the placement plan or agreed at a child care review). (c) Where the child/young person wishes to take their holiday separately.
<p>Birthday</p> <p>Age Range</p> <p>0-4 £123.00</p> <p>5-10 £137.00</p> <p>11-15 £156.00</p> <p>16-17 £184.00</p>	<p>One additional weeks allowance is paid in respect of a child's birthday which is provided to purchase a gift or gifts and to provide a contribution towards the cost of celebrations.</p>
<p>Christmas/Festival</p> <p>Age Range</p> <p>0-4 £123.00</p> <p>5-10 £137.00</p> <p>11-15 £156.00</p> <p>16-17 £184.00</p>	<p>One additional weeks allowance is paid in respect for the Christmas/Festival which is provided to purchase a gift or gifts and to provide a contribution towards the cost of celebrations.</p>
<p>Computers</p>	<p>Children and young people should have access to a computer whilst living in foster care to assist with education, learning and social activities. Eligible foster carers should contact their Supervising Social Worker, who will contact the Corporate Parenting Officer.</p>
<p>School holidays and trips</p>	<p>Financial assistance provided by foster carers or, Children, Schools and Families to pursue hobbies, leisure interests and social activities should be governed by the principle that these activities can be afforded by the young person at the age of eighteen, when they take over financial responsibility for their own affairs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Participation in curriculum based residential field trips is encouraged and the cost of these will be fully

	<p>funded. Foster carers should ask their supervising social worker to make a claim for exceptional expenditure. The supervising social worker will ensure that the child's social worker is informed and that the activity is appropriate for the particular child.</p> <p>(b) School holidays, which are not strictly curriculum based, are often recommended as beneficial to the young person in promoting self-esteem. Generally, these will be supported, but funding arrangements will be considered on a case by case basis. Where such holidays are particularly expensive, discussions will also need to take place as to the contribution the young person may make to these, for instance saving for spending money. This is simply endorsing the practice of good parenting and encouraging the child to be aware of good financial management.</p> <p>School day trips / outings costing less than £30 and up to one trip per term must be funded from the fostering allowance. Costs over and above this may be claimed on exceptional expenditure via the supervising social worker.</p>
Key Documents	<p>Children, Schools and Families Area 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.</p>
Hospital or Custody	<p>Pocket money and clothing are payable to children or young people if needed. Arrangements for payment will be made according to the specific circumstances of the child and not necessarily from fostering payments. This will need to be discussed with the area teams.</p>
Principles	<p><u>Exceptional Expenditure</u></p> <p>The foster care allowance includes the additional costs foster carers incur over and above looking after children in their own homes. Normal expenditure on hobbies, out of school activities, sports, bicycles, equipment, etc. is included.</p> <p>As the additional costs of fostering are already being met, it is only in exceptional cases that additional allowances will be required.</p>
Examples include	<p>(a) Where the special needs of the child cannot be met by the fostering allowance, e.g. special diet, special activities, extra hygiene, extra laundry, etc. (see note DLA below)</p> <p>(b) In permanent placement where the child or young person</p>

	<p>has only been in the home for a short while and a bicycle, other equipment or activity is necessary for school work, etc. (a loan to give a working young person time to save or a grant can be considered).</p> <p>(c) It is important in promoting the development of, or to establish the self-esteem of, a damaged child that an expensive item be purchased now rather than saved up for.</p> <p>(d) The equipment or activity is very expensive, e.g. sports equipment or musical instrument, expensive curriculum-based field trips, once it is established that the youngster intends to persevere with the subject, and it is important to his/her development. In such cases, please discuss with the music teacher, possibilities for loan initially and the pros and cons of buying a good second-hand instrument.</p> <p>(e) Permanent placements – at the start of the placement, the family placement team placing the child will be responsible for:</p> <p>(i) Bed, bedding and clothes storage.</p> <p>(ii) A contribution can be made towards other bedroom furnishings.</p> <p>(f) Loss of earnings – the department will consider claims for loss of earnings incurred in certain circumstances (e.g. attendance at care proceedings). These must be agreed with the family placement service in advance.</p> <p>Spectacles – the allowance covers the first £50 per annum of purchasing or replacing spectacles in each financial year. Expenditure in excess of this may be reclaimed.</p> <p>Family placement social workers should itemise the expenditure fully on FN024 (previously FC1) giving the criteria for the expenditure. All exceptional expenditure must be authorised by the head of fostering service.</p>
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Contributions from and Incentives for Young People Living in Foster Care (16 and 17 year olds)

From the end of academic school year eleven (usually June in the year of a young person's sixteenth birthday) until their eighteenth birthday, young people living in foster care placements can retain a net income of £80.00 per week before adjustments are made to their allowances, or contributions are required. This principle and the £80.00 threshold is intended to act as an incentive for young people to be involved in education, training and/or employment activities.

The £80 threshold is set by adding the clothing allowance (£18.51), the pocket money allowance (£11.25 per week), the Education Maintenance Allowance rate (£30.00 per week) and up to £20.24 from part time employment.

The aim of adjusting allowances is undertaken from the principle of assisting with the development of budgeting and money management skills and enabling young people to becoming accustomed to making payments for rent and bills.

Young people will continue to receive their pocket money (£11.25 per week 2010-11) and clothing allowance (£18.51 per week 2010-11) until a net income of £80.00 is reached. When the £80.00 threshold is reached, young people will be required to complete a Financial Assessment Form with their personal adviser or foster carer. Young people should add their net income (from the list below), minus any fares related to study or work. When the total after adjustments for fares is higher than £80.00, a third of the amount over £80.00 is set as the young person's contribution. If the young person's contribution is less than £26.00 it can be made by reducing the pocket money and clothing element of the fostering allowance. If it is over £26.00 the pocket money and clothing element of the maintenance allowance will cease and the additional amount paid by the young person to their personal adviser.

The following payments are considered as income:

- Pocket money
- Clothing allowance
- Education Maintenance Allowance
- Wages and salary from part time or full time employment
- Traineeship allowance
- Modern Apprenticeship allowance.

To assist a young person with making a successful transition to education or employment, and managing their income, they will not be expected to make any contributions until they have completed six weeks of employment. A young person will need to provide proof of income in order that his/her personal adviser can calculate any contributions. If proof is not forthcoming, it will be assumed that earnings are exceeding £80.00 net per week before taking their pocket money and clothing allowance into account, therefore these elements of the fostering allowance will cease.

7. Children with Disabilities

- 7.1 The supervising social worker, with assistance from the child's social worker, will ensure that any relevant disability allowances are claimed.
- 7.2 Young people aged 16/17 can claim income support in their own right if they are medically unfit for work. Even if still at school or college, the young person may be eligible.
- 7.3 Benefits need to be taken into account when assessing exceptional expenditure. Team managers (CSF area teams) should discuss these cases with the fostering team manager. Check with the money advice unit for details, changes and updates.
- 7.4 Disability Living Allowance (care) – DLA (care) will not be taken into account when assessing fostering allowances. However, in respect of exceptional expenditure and enhanced payment schemes, the use of DLA (care) may be taken into account.
- 7.5 DLA (mobility) – may or not, by law, be taken into account as a source of income. However, where Hertfordshire County Council is supporting the costs of a vehicle specifically for a disabled child, the mobility allowance will be taken into account when calculating the amount of additional financial support to be provided.
- 7.6 Once a young person reaches the age of 16 they receive DLA in their own right. It is important that at this point some discussion takes place with the young person's social worker to establish how this money is managed by the young person, and that they receive appropriate advice on money management.
- 7.7 Supervising social workers must ensure that foster carers caring for children with disabilities are given adequate support in claiming DLA and that they receive the applicable increase in any other benefit they claim as a result. A foster carer looking after a child getting DLA (care) may be due invalid care allowance for example. Contact the money advice unit for more information.
- 7.8 From April 2001, disabled children aged 3 and 4 can claim DLA (mobility) – the previous lower limit was age 5. DLA (care) can be claimed from birth if the child needs more care and attention than a non-disabled child of same age.

8. Taxation

8.1 The Government has changed the tax regulations for foster carers with effect from 1st April 2003. For taxation purposes, the Inland Revenue takes into account gross receipts from fostering. Carers are exempt from taxation where their gross receipts from fostering are below a threshold. Carers with receipts above the threshold may still choose to compute their profits in the normal way for self-employed persons. Alternatively, they can elect to treat the amount by which their gross receipts exceed the threshold as their taxable profit.

8.2 The threshold consists of two elements: -

- i) A fixed amount of £10,000
- ii) An additional amount per child of:
 - £200 per week for a child aged under 11
 - £250 per week for a child aged over 11

Note: Figures as per HM Revenue & Customs (August 2008)

8.3 The carer must calculate their individual threshold (qualifying amount) which has been £10,000 a year plus the relevant amount per week for each child they care for. If their total receipts are equal to or less than the threshold, all payments are exempt from taxation. If payments are greater than the threshold, the carer can choose between:

- (a) paying tax on the total receipts in excess of the threshold (without any separate relief for allowable expenses or capital allowances, or
- (b) paying tax on the actual profit from foster care worked out by calculating gross receipts, minus actual expenses and capital allowances.

8.4 This system provides greater consistency nationally. Foster carers are advised to look at their own tax position and if necessary take advice from their Inland Revenue office if they are in any doubt about how this affects them, or which taxation option to choose. Those carers who have previously negotiated individual agreements with their Inland Revenue office are strongly advised to review this situation. Hertfordshire County Council cannot advise generally on how those may be affected.

8.5 We advise carers to keep details of all children placed with them over the year, particularly noting their ages, and a record of all income and expenditure. This is particularly important in relation to exceptional expenditure and providing day care.

9. Home Responsibilities Protection (HRP) and entitlement to State Pensions

- 9.1 The Inland Revenue announced on 25th March 03 a revision to foster carers' entitlement to state pension entitlement. HRP will be available to foster carers, who were registered as foster carers for complete tax years from April 2003 onwards, where it will benefit their pension entitlement. This means that carers remaining at home to care for children will be credited automatically with national insurance contributions towards their entitlement to state pensions.
- 9.2 To claim HRP, foster carers must complete form CF411 available from the Inland Revenue. The fostering team will provide the carer with supporting evidence of their fostering status to submit with their claim.
- 9.3 Claims – the Foster Carer **providing** care should claim using form FN024A (foster carers expenses/reimbursement) on a monthly basis. The form should be sent to the foster carers' supervising social worker for authorisation.

10 Insurance Cover and ex-gratia payments

- 10.1 The foster carer should first make a claim on their own insurance cover for loss or damage caused by a foster child. We strongly advise that foster carers seek out insurance cover that covers at least accidental damage caused by foster children and we are aware that some companies offer this at a small extra cost. If the claim is not accepted, the foster carer may claim against Hertfordshire County Council policy. An ex-gratia payment may be made where Hertfordshire County Council policy does not cover the claim.
- 10.2 For all claims for loss or damage, whether insured or ex-gratia, the following rules apply:-
- (a) the family placement team should be told as soon as possible after the incident or loss occurred and within two weeks, unless the damage is not discovered until later and there is good reason for this.
 - (b) Where a claim is likely to cost over £1000, the supervising social worker will provide an insurance claim form. Where the claim is likely to cost less than £1000, the supervising social worker will provide the ex-gratia payment claim form. The carer must provide details of the damage and how caused to establish a claim on the ex-gratia payments budget.
 - (c) Each incident is claimed separately at the time of the damage or loss. Carers should not make accumulated claims for large amounts.
 - (d) The carer should submit two estimates for repairs on headed note paper from bona fide businesses, together with evidence of cost when new if the claim is to replace an item which they purchased.
 - (e) All insurance claims and claims for ex-gratia payments must be submitted to the family placement team manager who will pass the claim to the head of fostering service for authorisation and forwarding to the insurance department where applicable.

10.3 Hertfordshire County Council insurance cover is as follows:

(a) Property all risks: limit £250,000

(b) Public liability: legal liability to third parties for accidental loss or damage to property of injury, disease or death.

(c) Employer's liability: The County Council's liability to employees (including foster carers) for death, injury or disease.

Legal protection: cover for prosecution defence costs, personal legal advice and domestic assistance. Limit of £25,000.

Children, Schools and Families
Fostering Service
Financial Assessment Form

Income:

Item	Amount (£)
Clothing Allowance	
Pocket Money	
Education Maintenance Allowance	
Traineeship Allowance	
Modern Apprenticeship Allowance	
Earnings (Part and Full Time)	
Other	
Sub total 1	

Less fares related to work/training/study	
Sub total 2	

Deduct sub total 2 from sub total 1 to produce sub total 3

Sub total 3	
-------------	--

If sub-total 3 is over £80, one third of the surplus amount is the young person's contribution. This will be deducted from the pocket money and clothing allowance until it exceeds these amounts. When this occurs the pocket money and clothing allowance will cease and the personal adviser, social worker or placement supervising social worker will collect the amount of contribution exceeding pocket money and clothing allowance.

This form will need to be completed by the young person living in foster care (16 and 17 year olds) with their foster carer or personal advisor.

FORM FN024A: FOSTER CARERS EXPENSES CLAIM

Name	Address

Claim for

--	--

Children looked after this month – do not include children who are 'DAY CARE ONLY'

Name	Date of birth	Date arrived	Date left

Car Used	Make	Model	Engine size	Reg No:

Part 1: DAY CARE EXPENSES

(A) FOR CHILDREN PLACED WITH YOU WHO ARE NOT IN SCHOOL – TERM TIME ONLY

Name	Number of FULL days out of school	Number of HALF days out of school	TOTAL
		Total days Payable	Days
	@ £	Per day	= £ p 'A'

(B) FOR CHILDREN OF OTHER FOSTER CARERS PLACED WITH YOU BY ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE FAMILY PLACEMENT SERVICE

Name	Dob	Date	Time arrived	Time Left	Total Hours
				Total days payable	days
	@ £	per day		= £	p 'A'

*TOTAL PAYABLE 'C'	(i.e. 'A' + 'B' ABOVE)	= £	p	'C'
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*Social Workers – please transfer the total at 'C' to line 10 on Form FN024

Part 2: Mileage Expenses (see payment document for details)

FORM FN024B

EX-GRATIA PAYMENT APPLICATION FORM

To be used to claim recompense for deliberate damage / loss to carer(s)' property caused by a child / young person in their care.

PLEASE READ ALLOWANCES GUIDANCE PARAGRAPH 10 ON INSURANCE CLAIMS BEFORE COMPLETING THIS FORM.

Name:

Address, including postcode:

Telephone Number (day)

DETAILS OF THE LOSS / DAMAGE:

Date:	Approx time:
--------------	---------------------

**How did the incident happen and what was the extent of the damage?
(complete on a separate sheet if necessary)**

ITEMS LOST / DAMAGED	COST WHEN NEW	AGE OF ITEM	COST OF REPLACEMENT / REPAIR

Please continue on a separate sheet of paper if necessary

Child responsible:	
Date of birth:	
Date of placement:	

Name of carer(s)' Insurance Company

--

Has an Insurance claim been made? Yes / No

If yes, what were their comments? If no, state reasons:

--

Signed and dated:

Foster Carer	Supervising Social Worker	Team manager

To facilitate payment, please state to whom the cheque should be made payable:

Children, Schools and Families

PAYMENT OF FEES SCHEME FOR FOSTER CARERS

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INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the scheme of payment of fees to foster carers for Hertfordshire County Council Children, Schools and Families Service. The fees are reviewed annually each April.

The document does NOT cover long term foster care where a placement started before April 1999, foster care provided by friends and relatives (kinship placements) or shared care and should be read in conjunction with the scheme of payment for allowances.

All payments to foster carers are processed by the fostering team responsible for the supervision and support of the foster carer. The family placement service aims to ensure that foster carers receive their payment without delay and that exceptional claims are treated fairly. Carers should speak to their supervising social worker about any payment request or queries. They should not ask the area team child's social worker about payments as this causes confusion and sometimes delay in payment. Where a foster carer's request for payment relates to a child's particular needs, the supervising social worker will liaise with the child's social worker about whether the payment is appropriate.

The budget covers all payments that are directly made to foster carers. Any expenditure on looked after children that is not a foster carer payment remains the responsibility of the area team. If area teams are unsure who has responsibility for a particular cost, they should consult the family placement service.

PART ONE - PAYMENTS AND ALLOWANCES

1. Definitions

- 1.1 **Foster Care Fee** – the weekly fee either level 1 2 or 3, paid to Hertfordshire Foster Carers, depending on experience. Foster carers will normally be approved at level 1 and work towards level 2 competencies with the support of their supervising social worker, all applicants for level 2 must have completed Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) or Webster Stratton training and their CWDC workbook.
- 1.2 Level 3 foster carers will have completed all the requirements of level 2 and meet the additional level 3 competencies. Whilst it is anticipated that most foster carers will progress from level 1 to level 2, there is a limited number of level 3 foster carers, (8 in 2010) and level 3 foster carer must demonstrate that they are able to meet and maintain their level 3 status. In order to be approved as a level 3 carer fostering panel will need to be satisfied that all the level 3 competencies are met. Should level 3 carers cease to meet these competencies or be unable to manage the complex needs of specialist placements, but provide a good standard of care for children and young people they will become level 2 carers.

2. How and when Serco makes payments

- 2.1 Payments are made through softbox / serco at the same time as the allowance.

3. Carers' 'Annual Leave' (Account code 532900)

- 3.1 Carers approved on 1st April each year will be paid 2 weeks extra fee as an annual leave payment, calculated according to the number of placements for which the carer is approved to take. Carers joining the service part way through the financial year will receive their first annual leave payment the following April. This may be reclaimed pro-rata when carers leave the service. This payment is processed in April each year and will be received by carers by mid-May or earlier.
- 3.2 Paid annual leave can be taken separately from the family holidays:
- 3.3 Carers may nominate up to 2 weeks of paid leave (April – March basis) regardless of whether they actually go on leave:
 - Preferably when a child is not placed (see 10 above)
 - 28 days notice would be helpful
- 3.4 Arrangements for annual leave need to be discussed with supervising social workers.

- 3.5 The child's placement plan should include arrangements that need to be made for carers' annual leave.

4. Disturbance Fee

- 4.1 Where a placement is booked with a carer but not made, a disturbance allowance will be paid to cover the expenses of the carer in preparing for the placement.

Disturbance fee (1 child) - per day £13.67
Disturbance fee (siblings) – per day £20.60

This payment will be made within one calendar month of the cancellation.

5. Bed Blockers, Sessional Fees and Recovery Periods

5.1 Bed Blockers

Where, on account of the complex needs of a particular child, a foster carer is required to restrict the number of children in placement, an additional fee for each approved place 'blocked' will be paid. This must be set out in the child's care plan and placement agreement, agreed by the team manager (area) and approved by the manager (fostering team). Disputes may be raised with the Children's Service Manager (areas) and Head of Fostering Service.

5.2 Retainers and Sessional Payments

- i) Sessional payments can be made to carers who do preparatory or follow-up work at the end of a complex placement. Payments are made at the level of the carer's fee (Level 1 or 2). In exceptional circumstances where a foster carer is working with a child who has not been in placement, a sessional hourly rate may be paid, up to a maximum of 5 hours per week.
- ii) The foster care fee (level 1 or 2) is also made to carers holding a placement for children where care proceedings have been, or are about to be, initiated; for pre-adoption placements; and where children in placement are admitted (with their parents) to the Hertfordshire family assessment unit. The period of the payment will be agreed at the outset.

5.3 Recovery Period Payments

In exceptional circumstances, a carer and/or the department may request a recovery period. The request should be made by the supervising social worker in writing, signed by the fostering team manager and approved by the head of fostering service. The payment will be equivalent to the foster carers' fee for the number of vacancies held and will be for a maximum of 6 weeks.

6. Complaints and allegations

- 6.1 If a child is moved, or no placement made, due to an allegation, complaint or concern having been raised, level 1 or level 2 fees will continue to be paid

until the matter has been investigated, Most cases will require a foster care review being presented to foster panel.

- 6.2 The decision to pay a fee during dispute will be made by the fostering team manager in conjunction with the head of fostering service. Foster carers will be informed of this authorisation by their supervising social worker and/or fostering team manager at the earliest opportunity; this will be followed up with written notification from the fostering team manager.
- 6.3 The payment of fees during investigation is a supportive measure to ensure that the foster carer is not financially disadvantaged during this period.
- 6.4 For Level 3 foster carer notes 3-6 do not apply as level 3 foster carers are paid a fee for 52 weeks of the year, irrespective of whether they have a placement.

PART TWO - FOSTER CARERS

1 Number of Placements

- 1.1 Each household is approved for a number of children to a maximum of 3 children (or more if one sibling group). The fostering panel specifies this at the time of approval. Changes can be made by review and have to be ratified by the fostering panel.
- 1.2 In special circumstances a short-term exemption can be agreed. For 1 month fostering team manager gives approval. After 1 month an extension may be granted by head of fostering service for up to 3 months. By 3 months a review must be taken to the fostering panel for full consideration and a recommendation to the head of fostering service.
- 1.3 For payments in respect of annual leave, complex placement, 'bed-blockers', recovery periods and disputes, the amount of fees is based on the number of places and level approved by panel. This includes exemptions agreed by panel but not short-term exemptions. For 'annual leave' purposes – where a place is available for respite only, payments will be made at 50% of the approved fee level.
- 1.4 Level 3 foster carers will be approved for a maximum of 2 placements due to the complex nature of this work.

2 Timing and Acceptance of Placements

- 2.1 Placements will be made within the terms of the carer's approval. If personal commitments make this difficult it should be noted when they are approved at panel or at the annual review. Any change in circumstances for the carer and their family, which could affect the carer's acceptance of placements needs to be notified as soon as possible to their supervising social worker or duty worker.

2.2 In certain exceptional circumstances, foster carers, within the terms of their approval, may feel unable to accept certain placements. Their reasons for this will need to be explored, as family placement services staff will be monitoring vacancies e.g. length and reason for vacancy and reporting on them.

3. **Sickness**

3.1 When the carer is approved at panel, the arrangements for covering sickness should be discussed. Typically the carer's family or network will assist so that a child can remain in placement. If this is not possible, other back up arrangements with another foster carer should be made.

3.2 If the carer has a serious illness, an alternative arrangement will need to be made. Payment of the fee only will continue for 2 weeks after the end of the placement.

PART 3 Mother and baby placements

1. Mother and baby placements are complex and no such placements would be made unless the carer had been trained in assessment, individual circumstances vary. The starting point of all placements is:-

- Foster carers are paid a fee for both mother and child, regardless of the looked-after status of either. Foster carers are paid the foster care allowance for both mother and child plus any exceptional payments required.
- The allowance paid to the foster carers directly should be adjusted according to:
- The income of the mother, decisions about the respective responsibilities of the mother and foster carers (these must be set out clearly in the placement plan).

Guiding Principles:

- Mother should take what responsibility she can for budgeting etc. This includes providing for herself and child as far as possible from her own income.
 - Foster carers must not be out of pocket if they have to take over responsibility from the mother.
- 1.1 Clear expectations of all parties (including finances) must be set out in the placement agreement. The full fostering allowance and fee for both mother and child will be paid for the first month (minimum). The first review (at 4 weeks) should include financial arrangements.

1.2 Where it is agreed that the mother can make a contribution for herself and/or the child, the maintenance payment to the foster carer will be reduced. The fee will not be reduced and should be paid for both mother and child. The casework planning and supervision process will monitor the progress of these arrangements.

2 The Money Advice Unit has prepared the following guidance notes:

- 2.1 **If the mother is not working**, regardless of her age, income or case status, she can claim child benefit. If she is 16 or over, she can claim income support (whether in education or not and regardless of care status).
- 2.2 **If the mother is working**, (for 16 hours or more) she may be eligible to receive working tax credit for herself (which can include child care costs), (WTC) and child tax credit for her child. (CTC) 'Working' can include training schemes where the employer tops up the basic training allowance.
- 2.3 The mother may also be entitled to help with health costs (prescriptions, dental treatment, etc). For more information about this, telephone freephone 0800 555 777 and ask for leaflet HC1 (SC).
- 2.4 There is no minimum wage for those under the age of 18. For those aged 18 to 21, there is a national minimum wage. For details contact money advice unit advice line on 01992 556371
- 2.5 A working mother is not required to tell the child support agency who the child's father is if she claims CTC/WTC. Any maintenance she gets is ignored when working out her income. However, if she claims income support, she will normally be expected to name the father.

3 Housing costs:

- 3.1 Whilst in foster care, the young woman will not be entitled to housing benefit towards 'rent'. However, once out of care, e.g. at age 18, housing benefit can be claimed by young people even if they stay on with their former foster carers.

4 Lump Sum Payments:

- 4.1 Mothers getting income support, CTC at more than £545 a year (£1,090 if they have a child under 1) or WTC including an allowance for a disabled child may also qualify for a £500 sure start maternity grant from the social fund. A claim, on form SF100, can be made up to 11 weeks before the child's expected date of birth or up to three months after the birth.
- 4.2 If getting income support, the mother may be able to claim other help from the social fund, in the form of:
- A community care grant (for one-off items such as furniture, bedding etc), or
 - A budgeting loan, if she has been getting income support for over 26 weeks (also for one-off items but the money is a loan not a grant, or

- Crisis loans (in emergency situations, such as stolen money) are also available from the social fund, whether the claimant is on income support or not.
- 4.3 Whether a claim is successful will depend on what she is applying for, her level of priority and the funds available from her local social fund section. If the baby is looked-after, but she is not, and she is applying for assistance with items for the baby, the social fund section may decide that the fostering allowance paid to the carer would cover expenditure on the items claimed. However, if the mother is looked-after and the child not, the social fund section cannot use this argument.

5 Charges:

- 5.1 If the mother is in receipt of income support, WTC (at any rate) or CTC (at any rate above £545 per year) she cannot be asked by the County Council for a contribution to her accommodation or maintenance costs, of the baby or herself. This is part of the Children Act.
- 5.2 If the mother is not receiving one of these qualifying benefits, she may be asked to make a contribution to these costs, depending on who is looked after (the requirement to make charges is discretionary). However, the contribution must be reasonable in itself, and take into account what she can realistically afford.

6 Disability Benefits:

- 6.1 Lone parents who are disabled have the same right to DLA as other looked after young people. The only exception would be if she were living in a registered residential care home for people with disabilities. In these circumstances, seek advice from the money advice unit.
- 6.2 Any money that the mother receives from HCC as Section 17/24 payments is fully disregarded in working out entitlement to any means-tested benefit or tax credit.

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES
FAMILY PLACEMENT SERVICE

FOSTER CARE FEES PAYABLE

ANNUAL SUPPLEMENT

This document sets out the details of the payments for the current financial year and should be read alongside the Service Handbook

2010/2011

TABLE 1

The Hertfordshire Fees for 2010/2011

Payments for carers

Payments (per week)	0 – 4	5 – 10	11 – 15	16+
Level 1	104.50	110.38	166.28	181.65
Level 2	138.94	144.83	200.73	216.09
Level 3	398.56	398.56	398.56	398.56

Annual Leave payment (2 weeks for each placement approved for)

Payment (per week)	Level 1	Level 2
	55.42	89.86

OTHER FEES

Disturbance fee (1 child) **£13.67**

Disturbance fee (siblings) **£20.60**