

Dorset County Council Foster Carers receive a Skills Level Fee, based on their knowledge, experience and evidenced competences, and an age-related All-Inclusive Allowance (AIA) for each child they foster. Additional allowances are also paid as described below. The Foster Carer Fees and Allowances Policy outlines the fees and allowances scheme in more detail. Please contact the Fostering Service if you require a copy of this Policy.

Fostering Payments

1. Skills Level Fees

Payment of Skills Level fees is based on the evidence provided by Foster Carers, supported by their Fostering Social Workers, that they have met the criteria required for the Skills Level. The Foster Carer Fees and Allowances Policy details the criteria for each Skills Level.

Table 1: Skills Level Fees

Skills Level	Weekly Fee per LAC
Level 1 Newly Recruited and Connected Persons	70.00
Level 2 Skilled (also includes Connected Persons who have completed the Training, Support and Development workbook)	110.00
Level 3 Advanced	180.00
Level 4 Specialist	340.00

2. All-Inclusive Allowance (AIA)

The AIA is designed to meet all the usual expenses incurred in caring for a child in foster care. Foster Carers are expected to manage the allowance in line with a 'sensible parenting' approach. This may include saving some of the allowance to put towards other expenses a child may require throughout the year e.g. holidays, special events. The AIA is paid within four age bands.

Table 2: All-Inclusive Allowance

Age Group	All-Inclusive Weekly Allowance
0 – 4	146.00
5 – 10	168.00
11 – 15	208.00
16 – 17	252.00

The AIA has been calculated to meet all regular weekly expenses. A non-exhaustive list includes:

- Food, school dinner money, nappies, bottles and baby food.
- Clothing/shoes, including new clothes for school, religious festivals such as Eid, Diwali and party clothes for a Prom etc.
- Entertainments, hobbies, clubs, recreational activities, organisation clothes, musical and sporting equipment etc.
- Hairdressing.
- Playgroup and play scheme fees.
- Pocket money.
- Photographs (including school photos).
- Toys, books, games equipment, reading materials.
- Treats/outings.
- Transport (including public transport) to and from local school, attending meetings, supporting contact visits and other activities (discussed later).
- School day trips and activities.
- Family holidays.
- Contact lenses and glasses.
- Mobile phone contracts/top ups.
- Presents for children's friends.
- Household costs – including insurance, costs of breakages of minor items in daily use, additional gas, and electricity; wear and tear of furniture, carpets, telephone, durable goods, TV, washing machine, etc.
- Baby sitters for personal recreational activities.
- Broadband access.
- Telephone expenses incurred in maintaining contact with the child's family, and telephone calls to Social Workers, advocates and other professionals.
- Other routine 'one-off' expenses.

3. Additional Allowances

The following additional allowances will also be paid annually automatically for a child whilst in care (one per year).

Table 3: Additional allowances paid

Other Allowances (Paid Annually)	£			
	Age Group/Band			
	0 – 4	5 – 10	11 – 15	16+
Birthday (for gifts or contribution towards a party or clothing)	85.00	96.00	110.00	141.00
Christmas or Religious Festival (towards costs as above)	85.00	96.00	110.00	141.00
Holiday (contribution towards a holiday or day activities)	168.00	186.00	213.00	274.00

Training

Attendance at training events (approved Foster Carers only) provided via Dorset County Council payable at £25 per day or £12.50 per half day, up to 2 days per year. Childcare will also be reimbursed, if applicable, for all courses, and mileage is also paid.

Foster Carers own children

A £10 annual gift per child/young person is paid to Foster Carers' own children (under 18 years) every October to mark Sons and Daughters month.

Loyalty Fee

Paid to approved Foster Carers reaching the following milestones in their fostering career:

- 3 years £125
- 5 years £200
- 10 years £275.

Life Books

Per full Life Book completed by a Foster Carer with a child or young person - £50.

4. Other Discretionary Payments

Initial Clothing

A one-off emergency payment for initial clothing for a newly placed LAC, based on need, up to £75 for a child aged 0 to 10 and up to £100 for a child aged 11+. To be agreed by a Fostering Service manager.

School Uniform

Applications can be made for a one-off payment for a move to a new school for LAC - up to £75 primary school, £120 secondary school (badged items only). The remaining costs are included within the AIA. All claims must go to a Fostering Service manager.

School Mileage/Transport

Where foster carers transport children to school, 12 miles per week day is included within the AIA, 60 miles per week per child up to a maximum of 120 miles per fostering household. Where school mileage is above this figure the difference can be claimed. All claims must go to a Fostering Service manager.

Other Mileage

The AIA should cover mileage for any journeys made in respect of the looked after child (e.g. LAC appointments, reviews, education meetings, contact and hospital visits) but some requests may be considered for unusually frequent or long journeys in excess of 30 miles per child per week, and considered in the light of other journeys routinely taken by the foster carer. All claims must go to a Fostering Service manager.

Public Transport

If a child cannot access the free Dorset school bus service then a travel warrant should be purchased and paid for out of the AIA. Claims for travel to school in excess of £20 per child per week can be made. All claims must go to a Fostering Service manager.

Day-Care (Carer to Carer)

Where day-care is agreed to enable a Foster Carer to attend training or a specific meeting in relation to their LAC, another carer can provide day-care. Where agreed by a Fostering Service manager, they will be paid at £7.50 per hour for the first child, and £5 per hour for all additional children, up to a maximum of 8 hours.

Introductions Costs

A payment of £100 can be claimed by Foster Carers to cover the costs of supporting introductions in their own home, local travel to the child's new home and to provide refreshments, to new adoptive parents or long-term carers. This recognises the intensity and importance of ensuring the child moves successfully. Any further accommodation costs where Foster Carers are expected to travel and stay in the new area will be met by DCC.

Grants for Vocational Courses/Training

This is included within the AIA but if the costs are exceptionally high, and in line with the child's Care Plan, then a request for a contribution towards this may be made and will be considered by the Fostering Operational Manager on a case by case basis.

5. Retainers and Other Absences

Circumstances	Length of absence	AIA Paid	Skills Fee
Hospital (Child) NB expectation carers would continue re visiting and be key person for child	Up to 2 weeks (14 nights)	50%	100%
	Over 4 nights	Nil	100%
School-Trips/Other Trips (Scouts/Guides/Clubs etc.)	Up to 14 nights	50%	100%
	Over 14 nights	Nil	Nil
Shared Care with parents, grandparents etc. OR Carer to Carer Respite if part of child's Care Plan.	Up to 3 nights paid to both carers	100%	100%
	Over 4 and up to 14 nights the main carer receives:	Nil	50%
	Over 14 nights	Nil	Nil
Carer illness/operation or family bereavement and child moves to respite care (NB Child must return to the placement).	Up to 3 nights paid to both carers	100%	100%
	Over 4 and up to 14 nights	Nil	100%
	Over 14 nights	Nil	Negotiable case by case
Carers Break (subject to the approval of the Fostering Services Manager)	Up to 2 weeks (14 nights)	100%	100%
Retainers			
Circumstances	Length of Absence	AIA Paid	Skills Fee
Home on Trial	Up to 2 weeks (14 nights) assuming carers are still available to foster same child	Nil	50%
Reserving a placement prior to starting.	To secure for court purposes, planned moves for permanency	Nil	50%
Carer suspended re allegation / standards of care	Paid maximum 13 weeks while investigation ongoing	Nil	100% (paid one skill fee only) paid up to 13 weeks then review if allegation not concluded

Foster carers are self-employed and responsible for their own tax and National Insurance payments. They cannot claim Child Benefit or Child Tax Credits. Our Foster Carers are enrolled with FosterTalk who are able to provide information and advice on all matters in relation to fostering, including financial advice. They can be contacted on 0800 040 7675 or via enquiries@fosterline.info or www.fosterline.info.