

New Skill Level Scheme Explained:

Criteria for skill levels

There is a formal approval process to assess carers who are eligible for level 1, 2 or 3 skill level payments. The process evaluates foster carers skills against a specific set of criteria. This can be completed during the assessment process to become a foster carer or at a later date in a foster carer's career. To meet this criteria, foster carers or prospective foster carers need to evidence experience, training, qualifications, knowledge and skills.

Foster carers also need to be able to evidence that they have significantly improved outcomes for children within the framework of the Every Child Matters. Level 2 and 3 carers must be able to provide stability and support for children or young people who are difficult or challenging.

Level 1

Level 1 does not attract a skill level payment. Foster carers will be entitled to the fostering allowance for any child placed.

As a Therapeutic Fostering Service, it is expected that all new carers would participate fully in preparatory training during their assessment period and be approved as Level 2 carers.

However, it is recognised that a very small cohort of carers may not have undertaken this training prior to panel approval, hence this level recognises this.

This level also recognises that in cases of Friends and Family carers, children could be placed under temporary approval. However, Friends and Family carers should not be disadvantaged because of this, hence if the mandatory training is completed at the time of their panel approval their fee will be back dated to the time of the placement being made.

Carers will be expected to sign the Foster Carers Agreement and abide by the conditions within it.

Level 1 foster carers can progress in skill levels once they have gained fostering experience and knowledge and skills through attending training and development. To progress Level 2, they will have needed to complete the mandatory introductory training.

Level 2

1. The carer has completed all mandatory introductory training, including Skills to Foster, Safeguarding and Attachment.
2. The carer has undertaken or is in the process of undertaking all level one training requirements.
3. The carer is available and able to attend appointments with or on behalf of the child e.g. health, education, review and professional meetings including providing transportation.

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4. The carer can facilitate contact with parents, siblings and extended family members.
5. The carer can care for the child before and after school, during school holidays and during periods of sickness.
6. The carer can transport the child to and from school unless there are agreed reasons why not
7. The carer (both if jointly approved) has or will complete their TSD workbook within the required timescale .
8. The primary carer shows commitment to continuous learning and development and can evidence they have undertaken learning/training relevant to the fostering task
9. The carer can evidence a good understanding of child development and the importance of attachment
10. The carer is able to work in a professional manner as a member of the team around the foster child contributing to assessments, reviewing and planning.

Level 3

1. Carers will have experience and skills and a level of self-confidence which makes them willing to accept placements known to be more difficult than others.
2. Carers can evidence improving outcomes for children/young people where there are more complex/challenging needs in all 5 outcome areas of Every Child Matters.
3. Carers are able to provide placement stability for children presenting with complex and challenging behaviour including:
 - absconding, offending, self-harm, alcohol or/and substance misuse, social and emotional difficulties, attachment disorders, sexualised behaviour
 - Children with complex medical needs and/or disabilities
 - Supporting children with complex backgrounds
 - Managing large sibling placements
 - Have experience of a range of different types of placements
 - Available for children and young people on temporary school exclusions to work with them during the day on education matters.
4. Carers will have an understanding of the complexity of the needs of looked after children through experience and learning and development. This includes an understanding of all forms of abuse and neglect, child development and the importance of attachment with the ability to develop strategies when working with children and young people who find it difficult to respond emotionally.
5. Carer has undertaken more complex tasks and is working within fostering or related field at an increased professional level working alongside social workers and other professionals e.g. taking lead responsibility for aspects of child's care plan, presenting information verbally and in writing in

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a formal setting, securing new services for children, advocating for the child, contributing to assessments, rehabilitation plans, supervising contact, undertaking life story work etc.

6. Carer can provide accurate written and verbal information to appropriate professionals.
7. One carer will be required to be available for the child at all times - any work commitments of the carer must fit in around meeting the needs of the child.
8. Carer has the ability to **continue** to care for children/young people through challenging periods to achieve better placement stability.
9. Primary carer can evidence commitment to learning and development through attending all available core training or has evidence of similar learning from another setting. Carer (both if applicable) has or will complete TSD Workbook within required timescales.
10. Carer can evidence engaging with support networks for own support and that of others e.g. attending support groups, contributing to training, recruitment activities, buddying new carers/members of staff etc.
11. At least one carer will be at home full time in order to focus primarily on the needs of a complex child. This includes being available for children and young people on school exclusion and form part of their education package.

Level 3 Enhanced (For specific Children & Young People and step down fee for the Resilience Scheme)

The majority of children and young people with complex emotional and behaviour need will be placed with level two carers. However, it is recognised that some older children and young people with more significant behavioural concerns, which can have a significant impact on their carers. These children and young people present more challenges and need a high level of skill, resilience and staying power from carers and their families. The tasks associated with such placements are also more complex and time consuming for carers and can significantly impact on family life e.g. putting into practice therapeutic and behaviour management techniques, attending court, police stations, waking nights, attending multi agency meetings, health and education meetings etc.

When it is recognised that carers have the skill levels to provide placement stability and promote good outcomes consideration will be made for carers to be paid at Level Two Enhanced for specific children with the following behavioural and emotional needs:

- Significant emotional difficulties displayed in behaviour difficulties such as soiling, school refusal
- Significant behavioural difficulties such as high risk behaviour, cruelty to animals, destructive behaviour
- Attachment disorders - lack of/ or unstable / poor relationships.

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- Persistent offending or serious offending.
 - School refusal or exclusion.
 - Inappropriate sexualised behaviour.
 - Significant substance misuse.
 - Self-harm & suicidal behaviour.
 - Significant aggressive behaviour.
 - Have communication & social difficulties associated with Autistic Spectrum Disorder.
 - Persistent runaways.
 - Complex & higher level personal care & support needs.
 - Have volatile medical conditions or deteriorating illness including mental health.
 - Multiple placement breakdowns .

Level 4 Resilience Carers

- Children/Young People leaving Residential.
- Children/Young People with multiple placement breakdowns.
- Children/Young People at risk of Residential care.
- Children/Young People with adoption breakdowns.

Resilience Placements long term/short term placements that have management approval for enhanced financial payments for specific time frames. Resilience scheme is offers a bespoke package of support with high levels of management oversight and supervisor.

Resilience payments will be reviewed every six months. Carers are required to evidence their participation in the training and development package for Resilience carers.

Resilience carers are expected to participate fully in the placement plan, which would include a higher visitation pattern from their supervising social worker, participation in the resilience monthly support group and full participation with the placement review process.

It is expected that both carers would have robust training profiles.

Carers are required to evidence placement stability and positive outcomes for the child in their care.

The majority of Resilience placements will not require a long term enhanced package of supervision and management oversight. However, there may be exceptions to this.

There will be a stepdown process for fee payments when it is identified that the high level support package is no longer required.

See Foster Carer's Guide to the Resilience Scheme.

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New Fostering & Allowance Proposal

| Level 1 Carers | | | |
|---|------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Age Group | Foster Carer Allowance | Level One | Weekly Total |
| 0 – 4 Years old | £125 | No Skill Level Payment | £125 |
| 5 – 10 Years old | £146.86 | No Skill Level Payment | £146.86 |
| 11 – 15 Years old | £183.87 | No Skill Level Payment | £183.87 |
| 16 Years old | £189.36 | No Skill Level Payment | £189.36 |
| 17 Years old | £174.36 | No Skill Level Payment | £174.36 |
| Level 2 Carers | | | |
| Age Group | Foster Carer Allowance | Level Two Skill Level Payment | Weekly Total |
| 0 – 4 Years old | £125 | £100 | £225 |
| 5 – 10 Years old | £146.86 | £100 | £246.86 |
| 11 – 15 Years old | £183.87 | £100 | £283.87 |
| 16 Years old | £189.36 | £100 | £283.87 |
| 17 Years old | £174.36 | £100 | £274.36 |
| Holiday Allowance: £3.86 per week (Equivalent to 2 x Weekly Skill Level Payments per year) | | | |

Level One:

Newly approved carers who have not completed the mandatory introductory training during the assessment process.

Level Two Summary:

Carers will be approved at Level Two if the expected mandatory training has been completed during the assessment process prior to approval.

They are committed to engage with all fostering expectations in regard to statutory meetings, attending forums and support groups & ongoing training. They can demonstrate their ability to support a child to meet their developmental milestones and have achieved positive outcomes.

Carers would be expected to have undertaken or in the process of undertaking all enhanced level one training requirements

They demonstrate an awareness and application of attachment style parenting. Carers would be encouraged to provide 28 days' notice

Level One:

Children placed within Level One placements will have a range of needs and behavioural challenges, which the carers will be expected to support and meet.

Carers at this stage would not have been expected to have completed any training at this stage. Carers are expected to meet all fostering standards.

Level Two:

Carers would have undertaken the following minimum training:

- Skills to foster training
- Attachment Training
- Safeguarding Training

To maintain the skill level, it is expected they would work towards the Level Two training requirements as identified in their training and development plan.

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| Level 3 Carers | | | |
|--|------------------------|--|--------------|
| Age Group | Foster Carer Allowance | Level Three Skill Level Payment | Weekly Total |
| 0 – 4 Years old | £125 | £175 | £300 |
| 5 – 10 Years old | £146.86 | £175 | £321.86 |
| 11 – 15 Years old | £183.87 | £175 | £358.87 |
| 16 Years old | £189.36 | £175 | £364.36 |
| 17 Years old | £174.36 | £175 | £349.36 |
| Weekly Retainer : £65.00 (paid for a maximum of 6 weeks carers are without placement) Holiday Allowance : £6.73 per week (Equivalent to 2 x Weekly Skill Level Payments per year) | | | |
| Level Three Enhanced | | | |
| Age Group | Foster Carer Allowance | Level Three Enhanced Skill Level Payment | Weekly Total |
| 0 – 4 Years old | £125 | £195 | £320 |
| 5 – 10 Years old | £146.86 | £250 | £396.86 |
| 11 – 15 Years old | £183.87 | £250 | £433.87 |
| 16 Years old | £189.36 | £250 | £439.36 |
| 17 Years old | £174.36 | £250 | £424.36 |

Level Three Summary:

Carers would be expected to have undertaken all level two training requirements and that they are able to manage children with complex needs and challenging behaviours. They proactively engage in all meetings in respects of the child and undertake all transport requirements

They proactively work with professionals and access support through the fostering team and clinical psychologist report. They demonstrate an in-depth awareness and application of attachment style parenting and have demonstrated an ability to maintain placements of children with complex and challenging behaviour. They demonstrate an ability to work well with parents and relatives.

They should actively support the fostering community through mentoring.

Children placed with level two carers will be in need of skilled and knowledgeable carers. There may be issues with the following: school attendance, additional health needs, high levels of contact, attachment disorders, verbally challenging/abusive behaviour, lack of routines and boundaries, absconding, complex relationships with extended family, CAHMS involvement, YOT involvement, inappropriate sexualised behaviour and a history of placement break downs.

Carer would need to also be able to evidence examples of contributing to positive outcomes for children in their care. They would need to evidence being confident in their application of attachment style parenting. Carers would be expected to provide 28 days' notice.

Level Three:

Carers would have evidence they are committed to training, have undertaken level one requirements and are actively engaging in training available. Level two carers will need to evidence that they are meeting the yearly training requirements.

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Holiday Allowance: £9.62 per week
(Equivalent to 2 x Weekly Skill Level Payments per year)

Level 3 Enhanced Summary:

(Level 3 Enhanced is attached to carers for specific children/YP & is also the stepdown fee for Resilience placements)

Foster carers would be able to evidence maintaining placements for children with highly complex emotional and behavioural challenges. Carers would be able to evidence positive outcomes for children in their care.

They proactively work with professionals and access support through the fostering team and clinical psychologist. They demonstrate an in depth awareness and application of attachment style parenting.

They must have a good track record of working well as a multiagency team to achieve positive outcomes for the children/young people in their care. They must have resilience in managing complex, challenging and disruptive behaviour.

All required training should be complete and can demonstrate applying this in practice. Commitment towards ongoing training and personal development.

Carers would be expected to provide 28 days' notice.

Level Three Enhanced would need to evidence they are meeting the yearly training requirements.

| Level Four | | | | Specialist Level 4 Summary: All of the above plus; Scheme Three is specifically for children who have been identified by professionals as requiring a highly supportive package of care in order to maintain the placement. Children entering the resilience scheme would normally be unable to be placed alongside children of any age and present with highly disruptive behaviour and/ or who have had a history of placement breakdown or are transitioning from a residential placement. |
|---|------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|---|
| Age Group | Foster Carer Allowance | Level Four Skill Level Payment | Weekly Total | |
| 5 – 10 Years old | £146.86 | £500 | £646.86 | |
| 11 – 15 Years old | £183.87 | £500 | £683.87 | |
| 16 Years old | £189.36 | £500 | £689.36 | |
| 17 Years old | £174.36 | £500 | £674.36 | |
| Weekly Retainer (P&C): £65.00 Ppaid for a maximum of six weeks without a placement) | | | | |

Level Four would need to evidence they are meeting the yearly training requirements.

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|--|----------------------------|--|--|
| P&C carer fees: £100.00 assessment fee (For a twelve-week assessment period only) | | Resilient placement would normally be for fix time periods only with a period of transition to an enhance level two package. Parent & Child Carers are identified as Specialist Level 4 carers. | |
| Holiday Allowance: £38.46 per week (Equivalent to 4 x Weekly Skill Level Payments per year). | | | |
| Other Skill Level Payments | | Staying Put Enhanced £310.79pw | |
| Category | Skill Level Payment | | |
| Staying Put | £239 | | |
| Separated Child Seeking Asylum (per week) | £225 | | |
| | | | |
| Other Carer Payments | | Day Care requests to be approved by Fostering Management prior to being undertaken. Enhanced Day Care for Parent & Child Placements and Resilience Placements (enhanced rate to be agreed by management). | |
| Category | Hourly Rate | | |
| Day Care | £5 | | |
| Enhanced Day Care | £11.70 | | |
| | | | |

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Shared Care Rates

| Overnight Stays | | | <p>Day care to stay within the maximum hours agreed in the child's short break care plan. Claims to be within the nearest half hour of care provided; eg Care period 30hrs 10 mins = 30hr Care period 30h 20 m = 30.5 hr.</p> <p>Additional Fee £10: Payable if you are required to attend a formal meeting regarding your link child, such as the child's review or case conference, at a time when you are not already caring for the child. (Not payable for shared carer's annual review or for social worker's visits.)</p> <p>Mileage: 40p per mile for car travel to and from child's home, as agreed in the short break care plan.</p> |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|---|--|
| | Shared Care Overnight Stay | Shared Care Enhanced Overnight stay (waking night supervision /exceptional needs) | |
| Hourly Rate | £6.50/hr | £8.50/hr | |
| No of Overnights/ Hours: | | | |
| 1 Night (24 hours) | £156 | £204 | |
| 2 Nights (48 hours) | £312 | £408 | |
| 3 Nights (72) | £468 | £612 | |
| 4 Nights (96) | £624 | £816 | |
| 5 Nights (120) | £780 | £1020 | |
| 6 Nights (144) | £936 | £1224 | |
| 7 Nights (168) | £1092 | £1428 | |
| Day Care Sessional Rates | | | |
| | Shared Care Day | Shared Care Enhanced Day (exceptional needs & 2:1) | |
| Hours | £8.50/hr | £10.50/hr | |
| 1 | £8.50 | £10.50 | |
| 2 | £17 | £21 | |
| 3 | £25.50 | £31.50 | |
| 4 | £34 | £42 | |
| 5 | £42.50 | £52.50 | |
| 6 | £51 | £63 | |
| 7 | £59.50 | £73.50 | |
| 8 | £68 | £84 | |

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| | | |
|----|--------|--------|
| 9 | £76.50 | £94.50 |
| 10 | £85 | £105 |

| Supported Lodgings Rates | | | <p>Standard Carers are expected to complete the Prep Course, Fledgling Year, Professional Development Training and attend Standard Support Groups.</p> <p>SCSA Carers are expected to complete the same as the standard carers, whilst also completing specialist training for SCSA and SCSA Support Groups.</p> <p>Enhanced Carers are expected to complete the Standard requirements, as well as specialist training and Action Learning Sets.</p> <p>Mother and Baby Carers are expected to complete the Standard requirements, as well as Specialist Training and Reflection Groups.</p> <p>Stepdown Residential Carers are expected to complete the Standard Requirements, as well as specialist training and Resilience Support Groups.</p> |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|-------------|---|
| | Nightly Rate | Weekly Rate | |
| Standard | £ 28.57 | £ 200.00 | |
| Separated Children Seeking Asylum | £ 32.14 | £ 225.00 | |
| Enhanced | £ 37.14 | £ 260.00 | |
| Mother and Baby | £ 55.71 | £ 390.00 | |
| Stepdown Residential | £ 71.43 | £ 500.00 | |

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