

North Somerset Council Children's Services

# Fees and Allowances Policy

2025-26



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Version number 1	01/04/2025	Diana Griffiths, Katie Bailey, Louisa Loveridge	01/04/2026
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This document details the current fees and allowances paid to foster carers looking after children in care and is reviewed on an annual basis.

If you have any queries about any of the information in this document, please speak to your supervising social worker or contact the fostering team.

## 1. Weekly Allowances and Skill Level Fees

### 1.1 Weekly Allowances

Foster carers receive a maintenance allowance to cover the cost of caring for a child. The Department for Education sets national minimum rates for these allowances each financial year. The level of allowance is reviewed by the Council every year to ensure that the level of allowance for each age band is at or above the rate recommended by the Department for Education.

#### The current rates of allowances are paid from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025

Weekly allowances are paid to carers to cover the costs of looking after each child and should be spent in full on the child. These allowances apply to short-term, long-term and specialist care packages.

Age of Child	0-4 years old	5-10 years old	11-15 years old	16-18 years old
Weekly Allowance	£194.60	£213.50	£236.25	£269.50

### 1.2 Skill Level Fees

All carers receive a fee based on their assessed skill level (taking into account their experience and training undertaken). These fees can be seen below.

- Fees are graded according to your assessed skill level.
- All new foster carers receive the Foundation skills level unless otherwise agreed by the Head of Corporate Parenting.

- You can increase your skills levels by undertaking training in line with your Skills Development Plan, this will increase your fees.
- Fees are only paid when you have a child staying with you.
- Enhanced fees can be paid to specialist carers.

The levels of payments in North Somerset follows this structure:

- Foundation Level for newly approved foster carers who have attended preparation group training and completed the mandatory pre-approval training but have not yet completed their first-year mandatory training or Training, Support and Development (TSD) standards portfolio.
- Intermediate Level for foster carers who have completed all of their first-year mandatory training, their TSD portfolio and are undertaking more advanced training and are maintaining minimum requirements.
- Advanced Level for foster carers who are providing specialisms and good practice required by the fostering service. Advanced Level foster carers will have completed all Foundation and Intermediate Level Training and completed any training written in their Skills Development Plan in order to demonstrate their learning and knowledge. Advanced Level carers would be expected to contribute to the development of the service or of another carer. Any advanced level carers are expected to maintain their level by completing the requirements stated within the training policy. See training policy for further details.
- Specific training and allowances are also available for North Somerset Mockingbird Hub carers to recognise the specific role they play in supporting other foster carers and maintaining their Mockingbird constellation.
- Similarly specific training and allowances are available for those engaged as Specialist Foster Carers. These carers provide placements to children and young people with highly complex needs moving from residential care or who would otherwise require specialist residential care; for which they receive a specialist carer fee. This also includes children who require a high level of support because of their complex needs which has been agreed by all managers involved. This level will also include parent and child carers.

The scheme aims to provide a clear career pathway for foster carers, rewarding and supporting ongoing post-approval development and child-focused foster care. Progression on the scheme is dependent upon ongoing evidence of competence. Although experience and attendance at post-approval workshops are important factors, they do not guarantee progression.

Regular attendance at post-approval training / workshops is seen as an essential component of the scheme for two reasons: it promotes post-approval learning and development; and it provides opportunities for experienced foster carers to share experiences and knowledge

with other carers. Training run by other organisations may be accepted by the Team Manager, in specifically agreed cases.

While it is hoped that the majority of foster carers will progress to at least Intermediate Level of the scheme, those who do not meet the requirements of a specific level may be moved to a lower level. For example, if an Intermediate Level carer does not attend training specified in their SDP or fails to offer high quality foster care, they may be regraded through the foster care review process to Foundation Level. Significant practice concerns may result in a recommendation to terminate approval as foster carers.

Foster carers who, for personal reasons such as bereavement or a significant change in family circumstances, need to take a break from fostering, will generally resume their fostering at the same level as the one they were on when they temporarily stopped fostering.

Progression through the scheme is achieved through the foster care review process, the means established through regulation for assessing the quality of foster care provision. In order to ensure consistency and independent scrutiny, all decisions related to progression within the scheme are presented for recommendation to the Foster Panel. The panel's recommendation will be shared with the Agency Decision Maker for ratification. Payments related to progression will commence following approval by the Agency Decision Maker.

Level	Weekly Payment
Foundation	£78.83
Intermediate	£133.57
Advanced	£186.19
Specialist	£361.61
Mockingbird Hub Carers	£750.00*

\* Increases to £850 after 2 years in the role

### 1.3 Day Care

There may be times when we ask you to care for a child or young person for specific times of the day. This could be for a variety of reasons and will be agreed by a Team Manager prior to this happening. Any day care support required will typically be discussed at a Placement Planning or Placement Support meeting and will be reviewed regularly. The hourly rate for this will be paid at £10 per hour for the first child and £5 for subsequent children.

## 1.4 Sleepovers or Short Breaks

Some carers can only care for children at certain times of the week, this may be because they have work or family commitments. Sleepovers are paid for a 24-hour period and are calculated on a pro rata basis using the skills levels and age-related allowances for the child, dividing the weekly payment by 7 and then multiplying the number of nights the child/ren sleep over. As we recognise that the sleepover carers often want to take the child out for activities, we will also provide up to an additional £50 for day care around the sleepover hours of 7pm to 8am if carers are caring for a child outside of these hours (£25 for subsequent children). This can be claimed once per sleepover period.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 the deductions to the substantive carers made for sleepover arrangements of 3 nights or less will cease, there will be no deductions. It is expected that the substantive carer would continue as usual with pocket money and savings in this situation.

## 1.5 Birthdays, Festival and Holiday Allowance

A birthday payment should be made with the carer's payment immediately before the date of the child's birthday. If placement is made prior to the birthday but after the payment date, the allowance will be included in the next payment.

A festival payment will be included in the first payment in December. If the foster carer would prefer the festival allowance to be paid at a different time of year, then this should be requested through their Supervising Social Worker.

A holiday allowance will be paid on an annual basis. The amount payable depends on the age of the young person and will be paid in June.

Age	Birthday Payment	Festival Payment	Holiday Payment
0-4 years old	£194.60	£194.60	£389.20
5-10 years old	£213.50	£213.50	£427
11-15 years old	£236.25	£236.25	£472.50
16-18 years old	£269.50	£269.50	£539

In some circumstances children move on to new carers prior to their birthdays, festival celebrations or holidays. In these situations, we can request these allowances are to be paid to the new carer and we can recoup the monies from the previous carer, if necessary.

## 1.6 Staying Put Allowance

'Staying Put' accommodation provides for young people aged 18+ to remain living with their previous foster carers and is available to young adults who were placed with foster carers immediately prior to their 18th birthday. This is not an extension to the fostering placement but rather a supportive environment for young people to develop their independence skills further.

Staying put carers are paid **£224 per week**, minus the contributions from housing benefit and young person contribution.

If eligible, young people are expected to claim housing benefit and pay that to the Staying Put carers and contribute an additional £15.50 per week from their leaving care allowance to the carer each week.

## 1.7 Supported Lodgings Allowance

'Supported Lodgings' accommodation provides for young people aged 16+ who want to reside in a home with a 'host' who will support them through to independence. This is not a fostering placement but rather a supportive environment for young people to develop their independence skills further. North Somerset are currently developing this service; we are in the process of registering with Ofsted and will hopefully be increasing the number of supported lodgings hosts over the coming financial year.

Supported Lodgings hosts are paid **£224 per week** minus the contributions from housing benefit and young person contribution (where applicable).

If eligible, young people aged 18+ are expected to claim housing benefit and pay that to the Supported Lodgings hosts, and contribute an additional £15.50 per week from their leaving care allowance to the carer each week.

# 2. Additional Payments

## 2.1 Transport

In general, it is expected that, unless specifically agreed by the Fostering Service, carers will be responsible for the transport of children in placement. The transport costs of those outings which can be considered a part of ordinary family life – e.g., local travel to and from school, weekly food shopping or family trips – are included in the weekly fostering allowance and cannot be claimed for.

Expenses can, however, be paid by the fostering service for:

- making trips to hospital
- family time arrangements

- other exceptional travel expenses agreed by the appropriate manager.

This will be at a set rate of 45p per mile.

Foster carers will need to claim expenses made within three months of the transaction. Any claims bought after this timeframe will not be valid.

## 2.2 Adoption Transitions

There may be times when you will be asked to contribute to the transition plan for adoptions. Any monies for this will need to be authorised by a manager, this will be discussed and arranged in any planning meetings leading up to the transition. We recognise that transitions can differ for each child dependent on the circumstances so this will be discussed on an individual basis.

## 2.3 Support in purchase of vehicles

In exceptional circumstances where it can be demonstrated that the size of a foster carer's car has been increased as a direct result of taking on additional fostering tasks, North Somerset Council will consider providing financial support towards a family's vehicle purchase. These payments will only be made in exceptional circumstances, where the vehicle is necessary to support specific children and their needs.

Such payments will be limited. Any support in purchase of a vehicle will be accompanied by a legal agreement that the foster carer will refund all or part of the costs if they were to cease fostering for the authority within the agreed timescale, or if they were to cease caring for the child whose particular needs required the support towards purchase of a vehicle.

These payments will be discretionary and subject to the agreement of the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting with the Director of Children's Services making the final decision.

## 2.4 Clothing and Equipment Grants

An initial emergency clothing grant for each child can be made at the start of the placement. The amount will vary for each child, dependant on their age and circumstances. Please discuss this with your Supervising Social Worker. This will also be discussed at the placement planning meeting and will be subject to managers discretion, the money paid is based on individual circumstances and is set by the child's social worker and their Team Manager. The Fostering Service suggests that this would be up to £150 per child.

Discuss with your Supervising Social Worker, any requests for specialist equipment.

## 2.5 Passports and Documents

The cost of getting birth certificates (and copies), and passports for children in care will be met by the local authority.

Information is also available from the [GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk) about passports. Please do not book a holiday abroad for your fostered child without consulting with your social worker and the child's social worker in the first instance.

## 2.6 Additional Perks

Foster carers in North Somerset have access to perks such as free access to [North Somerset leisure centres](#) for 2 adults in the fostering household, all year round. We also hold events for our foster carers to both celebrate them and offer peer support and connection.

You are also automatically provided with free membership of the [Fostering Network](#), the leading national fostering charity, giving you a range of benefits. In addition, you can apply for a Blue Light Card (at a cost of £5) which will provide discounts to a range of shops and experiences. There is also a Carers Card which can be obtained from Carers Card UK at a cost of £8, this also provides a range of discounts and benefits.

## 2.7 Council Tax

For all our approved North Somerset foster carers we will pay council tax, whether you reside in North Somerset or outside of the county. This scheme is for all North Somerset carers that have been to fostering panel and their approval has been ratified by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM). If a carer ceases to foster or does not have a child in their care for a period of 3 months or more, without an appropriate reason, this exemption shall cease until such a time that you are actively fostering again. This will be a discussion between the Supervising Social Worker and the Team Manager. Payment of council tax for Staying Put carers will be at the discretion of the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting.

## 3. Expected Expenditure

The fostering allowance is expected to cover the day-to-day costs of caring for a child and must be spent in full on the child. Whilst not an exhaustive list, the fostering allowance contributes towards costs such as:

- The fostering home/child's bedroom (i.e. furnishing, utilities and bills, insurance)
- Food (to cover all dietary needs and requirements)
- Clothing (i.e. seasonally appropriate clothing, school uniform, cultural dress, event wear)
- Toiletries and personal needs (i.e. all basic toiletries, hair care, skin products, glasses, nappies)
- Travel

- Leisure and activities (i.e. recreational outings, costs associated with hobbies and clubs, school trips, holidays)

### 3.1 Savings and Pocket Money for Children in Your Care

We want all of our children to have savings which they can use when they leave care, this is extremely important for them. We are trying to develop a system where we can take savings for our children at source but until this happens, we expect our carers to save for them during the time they are residing with them. Carers are required to set up a bank account in the child's name by the time they have been in care for 13 weeks or the latest by the second Child in Care Review for savings (unless there is a clear plan for the child to return home imminently). There will be some situations where carers will be unable to open a bank account for a child, please speak to your social worker if you require any further information or support with this. Below are the minimum amounts we are recommending, carers can save more than this if they choose to.

Age of child	Savings (per week)	Pocket Money (per week)
0-4 years	£6	0
5-10 years	£8	£5
11-15 years	£9	£7
16 – 18 years	£10	£10

## 4. Additional Financial Matters – Benefits, Tax, Insurance and Receipts

### 4.1 Benefits

As a foster carer you may be entitled to various financial benefits including:

- Universal Credit/Tax Credits/Income Support
- Personal Independence Payment/Disability Living Allowance
- Housing Benefit
- Carers Allowance
- Council Tax Benefit

For further information and advice regarding various benefits, please see:

[www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)

[www.hmrc.gov.uk](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk)

## 4.2 Income Tax

Fostering is classed as self-employment therefore you will need to contact your local HMRC office and register as self-employed. You may also be asked to complete a tax return form, particularly if you have earnings from another source. Please note that this is the foster carer's responsibility not the local authority, however we can signpost you to support for this (see below).

Everyone's financial circumstances are different and there are many elements which can affect your tax liability such as:

- The number of placements you have
- The type of placement you have, for example, if you receive a fee in addition to the fostering allowance for the child
- Whether you foster with your partner
- Whether you receive any other income as well as your fostering income

Information and guidance is available on the HM Revenue and Customs website [www.hmrc.gov.uk/helpsheets](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/helpsheets) or your local HMRC Office can be contacted on Tel: 0844 4740101. Information and advice can also be sought by contacting the Fostering Network helpline on 02074 019 582.

## 4.3 Insurance

You must inform your home and car insurance provider once you have been approved as a foster carer. Tell them about the numbers of children and age ranges you expect to take. It is the carers responsibility to ensure that their insurance cover is appropriate to their circumstances as foster carers. You will be asked to show this to your social worker.

## 4.4 Receipts

You may be asked to keep a record\* of how the allowance is being spent on a child/young person. Foster carers will need to claim expenses made within three months of the transaction. Any claims bought after this timeframe will not be valid.

\*Please keep receipts as these may be asked for at times.