

North Somerset Council Children's Services

Fees and Allowance Policy 2026-2027



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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 1st April 2026

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

Age of Child	0-2 years old	2-4 years old	5-10 years old	11-15 years old	16-18 years old
Weekly Allowance	£200.44	£206.44	£219.91	£243.34	£277.59

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 Service
- 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 into 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. Please see our training policy for further details.
- Specialist payments are provided to carers who provide a home for children and young people with highly complex needs. The Service Lead or Head of Service will need to agree the Specialist payments in the first instance, this has a strict criteria and is always based on the level of support that children require. This is reviewed regularly and will cease if it is felt that the criteria is no longer met.
- Specialist Plus is a new skills payment for carers who are providing a home for children stepping down from a residential setting. To qualify for this payment carers must be able to commit to caring for the child on a long-term basis until adulthood or beyond.
- Mockingbird Hub carers receive a specific payment to recognise the specialist role they play in supporting other foster carers and maintaining their Mockingbird constellation.

The payment for skills 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 training and support groups are important factors, they do not guarantee progression.

Regular attendance at post-approval training and support groups 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 fail to meet the requirements of a specific level may be downgraded to a lower level. For example, if an Intermediate Level carer fails to 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. An annual review with the Independent Fostering Reviewing Officer or with the fostering panel can conclude with a recommendation regarding the skills level of carers. This recommendation will then be presented to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) who will decide whether they are in agreement or not, their decision will be based on the reports presented to them. Payments related to progression will commence following approval by the Agency Decision Maker.

Level	Weekly Payment
Foundation	£81.19
Intermediate	£137.58
Advanced	£191.78
Specialist	£372.03
Specialist Plus	£850.00
Mockingbird Hub Carers	£772.50/£875.50*

* Increases after 2 years in the role

Specialist and Specialist Plus Payments

Specialist Payments

Specialist Carer payments are set at **£372.03** per week and are intended for in-house foster carers caring for children with significant disabilities, high needs or complex challenges. The payment is attached to the child rather than the carer and must be reviewed regularly and if the child moves to another home.

Approval must be provided by the Head of Service or Fostering Service Lead, with management oversight recorded on both the child and carer records.

Age Related Allowance will be paid alongside the Specialist payment and Specialist Plus payments:

Age	Weekly Allowance
0-2	£200.44
2-4	£206.44
5-10	£219.91
11-15	£243.34
16-18	£277.59

Examples of Eligibility (this is not an exact list as it is based around a child's individual needs)

- Children who have experienced multiple moves or other challenges affecting their ability to settle and who require additional support.
- Children with disabilities or high needs that have been assessed and identified prior to moving to the home.
- Children requiring additional care and support because of behaviour that impacts the stability of the home.

Review Arrangements

The Specialist payment will be reviewed regularly, at least annually by the fostering Team Manager in conjunction with the child's Team Manager and Social Worker. Views from the Independent Safeguarding and Reviewing Officer may be sought. The Independent Fostering Reviewing Officer will review the arrangement as part of the annual foster carer review.

Review outcomes may include continuation of the payment until the next review, when the child transitions to a new home or the child reaching 18, or cessation of the payment where it is no longer required. If the child leaves the home, payment will revert to the carer's substantive skills level payment for subsequent children.

Specialist Requirements

- Undertake all training identified within the SDP and any bespoke training linked to the child's needs.
- Maintain high-quality records that demonstrate the child's progress and support reviews.
- Attend all additional meetings relating to the child.
- Ensure all payment review meetings are recorded on LCS for both the child and carer.
- Carers who continue with training identified within their Skills Development Plan (SDP), including any additional training required.

Planning Requirements

- Written confirmation must be provided at the home planning meeting that the specialist payment ends when the child leaves the home.

- The planning meeting must consider the child's additional needs and how these will be met by the carer.
- The first supervision session must clearly set out expectations and subsequent supervisions must review progress and strategies for reducing challenges.
- The carer must support with any additional appointments the child may have due to their needs.

Specialist Care Plus Payments

Specialist Care Plus payments are set at £850 per week and are intended for in-house or kinship foster carers caring for children transitioning from residential settings. Carers must commit to caring for the child until age 18 to qualify for the payment.

The payment is attached to the individual child and applies only in these circumstances. The arrangement must be clearly discussed at planning meetings. Approval must be given by the Head of Service prior to the child going to live with the carers with management oversight recorded on both the child and carer records.

Governance and Recording

All decisions, reviews and management oversight relating to Specialist Carer and Specialist Care Plus payments must be clearly recorded on the child and foster carer records to ensure transparency, consistency and accountability.

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 need to be agreed by a Team Manager/Service Lead or Head of Service for fostering prior to this happening. Any day care support required will be discussed at a Place of Care Planning or Support meeting and will be reviewed regularly. The hourly rate for this will be paid at £12.71 per hour for the first child and £6.36 for subsequent children. Any requests for day care would also need to be agreed by the child's social worker and their team manager. Day care will only be agreed if it is in a child's best interests and in extreme circumstances.

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 £63.55 for day care around the sleepover hours of 7pm to 8am if carers are caring for a child outside of these hours (£31.77 for subsequent children). This can only be claimed once per sleepover period.

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

Short breaks should only be utilised if the current carer's support network (alternative carers) is unable to care for the child. The short breaks provision in North Somerset is limited so we have to ensure that it is only used when there are no other options. We would expect carers to take their fostered children on holidays with them wherever possible. We recognise that most of our carers will always endeavour to take their fostered children on holiday with them as they recognise the disruption that it causes to children if they are moved to accommodate this. Any short breaks requests will need to be agreed by the children's social worker and team manager and will also need agreement from the team manager/service lead or head of service for fostering prior to this happening. All short breaks need to be planned well in advance and there is no guarantee that these will be agreed. Your supervising social worker will talk to you about this in more detail.

1.5 Birthdays, Festival and Holiday Allowance

A birthday payment should be made to the carers in the payment date immediately before the date of the child's birthday. If a child moves in with a carer prior to their 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
0-2 years old	£200.44	£200.44	£400.88
2-4 years old	£206.44	£206.44	£412.88
5-10 years old	£219.91	£219.91	£439.82
11-15 years old	£243.34	£243.34	£486.68
16-18 years old	£277.59	£277.59	£555.18

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

Staying put carers are paid **£230.72 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 £16 per week from their leaving care allowance/benefits 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 moving forward with the plan to register with Ofsted and will hopefully be increasing the number of supported lodgings hosts over the coming financial year.

Supported Lodgings hosts are paid **£230.72 per week** minus the contributions from housing benefit and young person contribution (where applicable).

If eligible, young people are expected to claim housing benefit and pay that to the Supported Lodgings hosts and contribute an additional £16 per week from their leaving care allowance/benefits 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 their care. 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 management

This will be at a set rate of 55p 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 Clothing and Equipment grants

An initial emergency clothing grant for each child can be made at the start of the child moving to live with the carers. 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 amount for this is up to £150 per child. Any requests for specialist equipment can also be discussed at the placement planning meeting.

2.4 Passports and Documents

The cost of getting birth certificates (and copies), and passports for children in care will be met by Children's Services.

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 the child's Social Worker and your Supervising Social Worker in the first instance.

2.5 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 offer free swimming lessons to all of our children in foster care with our in-house carers which includes kinship carers. We also hold numerous events throughout the year 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.

2.6 Council Tax

For all of 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). From the 1st April 2027 we will only be paying 50% council tax for our carers who are do not care for children on a full-time basis. If short breaks carers choose to care for children on a full time basis this will increase to a 100% exemption.

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 and if needed

it will be a decision made by the Head of Service. Council tax will also be cancelled if a carer no longer fosters due to becoming a staying put carer as this then moves to the leaving care team.

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 and their upkeep. Whilst not an exhaustive list, the fostering allowance contributes towards costs such as:

- The Fostering Home/child's bedroom (ie. furnishing, utilities and bills)
- Food (to cover all dietary needs and requirements)
- Clothing (ie. seasonally appropriate clothing, school uniform, cultural dress, event wear)
- Toiletries and Personal Needs (ie. all basic toiletries, hair care, skin products, glasses, nappies)
- Travel
- Leisure and Activities (ie. recreational outings, costs associated with hobbies and clubs, school trips, holidays)
- Savings and pocket money for the child in your care

3.1 Savings 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 have spent time developing a system where we can now take savings for children at source from your allowances. This means that you do not have to worry about paying savings into an account for children you care for and you can simply let us organise this. This will show on your remittance as savings.

Savings taken at source will go directly to the Share Foundation where an account will be set up for every child in our care. Some children may already have these accounts so we will continue to add to them. Carers who already have a bank account for children in their care can continue to add to this if they wish but this would be alongside the savings that we will take at source.

The amounts we will be deducting are below:

Age of Child	Savings Deducted (per week)
0-11	£6
11-18	£10

3.2 Pocket Money for Children in Your Care

All children in your care should receive pocket money, especially when they are old enough to learn the concept of money management. The amounts below are a minimum amount that we would recommend every child receives:

Age of child	Pocket Money (per week)
0-4 years	£0
5-10 years	£5
11-15 years	£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

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 carers responsibility not the local authority, however we can signpost you to support for this (see below).

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

- The number of children you care for
- The type of care you provide, for example, if you receive a higher 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 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. We will let you know when the Fostering Network deliver their training sessions on tax as it is important that you attend to learn more about your responsibilities.

4.3 Insurance

You must inform your Home, Building and Contents and Car insurance company once you have been approved as a foster carer. Tell them about the numbers of children and age ranges you expect to care for. 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.

This policy aims to support you with any queries around finances and your entitlement as foster carers. However, we recognise that there may be individual circumstances that differ for all of our children and foster carers. Please talk to your social worker if there is anything that you are unsure about.