



WIRRAL

**Children & Young People's
Department**

**GUIDE TO THE
PAYMENT OF
FOSTER CARERS**

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INTRODUCTION

This guide is for foster carers and those who authorise payments to carers, supervising social workers and staff involved in the supervision of children in placement.

Payments of allowances to foster carers are made through the Department's computerised payments system, SWIFT.

The Wirral Fostering Service is responsible for ensuring that carers receive the correct payment through the loading of details in respect of children who are looked after and placed with foster carers.

This guide outlines the nature and details of payments to be made to carers.

Please ensure that you read and understand this guidance. Advice on any aspect of these allowances is available from a supervising social worker.

Please note that the payment of Skills Based Fees does not apply to those approved as 'Friends and Family' foster carers.

PRINCIPLES OF PAYMENT TO FOSTER CARERS

Payments to carers are divided into 2 categories as follows:

- **FOSTERING ALLOWANCES**
These are remuneration and reimbursement payments. They are paid to cover the daily costs of caring for a child or young person and other payments made to cover specific costs they incur.

- **FEES**
Fees are reward payments, paid to carers recognising their skills in caring for children and young people.

PART ONE – ALLOWANCES

BASIC FOSTERING ALLOWANCE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

This is a basic weekly allowance paid for all children looked after in foster families, which varies according to the child's age.

The fostering allowance covers:

- General maintenance including food, accommodation and related costs
- Normal replacement of clothing
- Pocket money
- A limited amount of assessment of the child
- Attendance at review meetings etc.
- Involvement in clubs and activities
- Keeping a record of events and memories about the child for the child

In addition there are payments made annually towards the cost of birthday and Christmas.

**Table 1 Fostering allowances 2007 - 2008
Birthday and Christmas Allowances**

Age	Weekly Fostering Allowance Standard	Birthday Allowance	Christmas Allowance
0 – 1	£81.11	£81.11	£81.11
2 – 4	£81.11	£81.11	£81.11
5 – 10	£92.46	£92.46	£92.46
11 – 15	£115.10	£115.10	£115.10
16+	£135.31	£135.31	£135.31

FOSTER CHILDREN OF WORKING AGE

- (a) If a young person is 16 or over and is in full time education, carers will receive allowances as set out in Table 1.
- (b) If a young person of 16 or over is not in full time education and is in receipt of an income of any kind, then that young person may be expected to make a contribution towards their keep.

If a young person earns:-

- £60.00 per week... fostering allowances are reduced by clothing allowance and pocket money. In this instance the young people are responsible for the purchase of their own clothes.

- £40.00 per week ... fostering allowances are reduced by 59.65% of the amount for clothing and all pocket money. The young people and the foster carers share the responsibility for clothing.
- £30.00 per week...fostering allowances are reduced by half of the amount normally considered for clothing and all pocket money. The young people and the foster carers share the responsibility for clothing.

There will be an expectation that foster carers will allow young people to manage some of their own finances. Carers may wish to provide young people with an element of the fostering allowance e.g. for clothing and pocket money. Where this is not appropriate, the reasons should be explicit. Financial arrangements should avoid any disincentive to take employment. Young people should also be encouraged to put some money into savings.

- (c) If the young person starts to receive an income of any kind, it is important that the Fostering Service is informed of this immediately so that payments into SWIFT can be amended promptly. The child’s social worker should also be informed.
- (b) If a child or young person received the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) no deduction to the basic allowance will be made.

Allowances are paid fortnightly in arrears. Payments are made for the day of the child’s arrival in placement and for the day of departure.

The Fostering Network has considered the various components of the weekly allowance. The table below shows how the weekly basic allowance breaks down under various component headings. Carers may find the information useful.

Table 2 Fostering Network guidance

Age	Food	Clothing	Transport	Personal	Household	Total
0- 1	34%	22%	8%	6%	30%	100%
2- 4	34%	22%	8%	6%	30%	100%
5-10	32%	26%	7%	8%	27%	100%
11-15	32%	26%	11%	10%	21%	100%
16+	30%	26%	9%	17%	18%	100%

The Supervising Social Worker and the Child’s Social Worker are to ensure that the fostering allowance is spent on the placed child(ren) in an appropriate manner which meets the child(ren)’s needs.

HOLIDAY ALLOWANCES

Each child living with foster carers is entitled to the payment of up to two weeks holiday allowance a year, which may be claimed pro rata. The payment relates to the financial year April to March and the amount to be paid varies according to the age of the child. The holiday allowance is paid to allow carers to take a child on holiday or to be used for holiday activities.

Foster carers must claim the holiday allowance at the time it is needed. The payment is not made automatically.

Table 3 – Holiday Allowance

Age	Holiday Allowance
0 – 1	£162.22
2 – 4	£162.22
5 – 10	£184.93
11- 15	£230.19
16 +	£270.63

SCHOOL ORGANISED HOLIDAYS AND TRIPS

The cost of field trips and residential courses, which are an integral and necessary part of the child's school curriculum, can be claimed from the Department.

The Department will not meet the cost of school organised holidays such as skiing holidays or visits to foreign countries other than in exceptional circumstances.

Foster carers are expected to meet the clothing/equipment needs of the child for holidays and trips from the weekly allowance and or the annual holiday allowance.

INITIAL CLOTHING

An allowance of up to **£200** can be paid for each child. Please note this amount is usually only paid once during each care career as the fostering allowance contains an element for clothing replacement etc. The allowance paid must allow the carer to purchase sufficient and appropriate clothing for the child. Carers may choose to use the allowance initially in part, using the remainder at a later date.

EXCEPTIONAL CHILD SPECIFIC COSTS

There may be specific expenses that arise because of a child or young person's cultural or ethnic background. These expenses should be specified within the Placement Agreement or authorised by the Wirral Fostering Service.

TRAVEL/MILEAGE & TELEPHONE EXPENSES

The basic fostering allowance includes an element for travelling costs which are part of the normal pattern of expenditure incurred in looking after foster children. Only travel costs which arise from the need to meet those Children & Young People's Department requirements that are beyond the normal pattern of family expenditure can be claimed.

Examples of travel which the foster care would be expected to absorb within the fostering allowance would include:

- Normal trips for medical appointments if local to the foster carers.
- Transport to and from school where the school is less than 1 mile from the foster home.
- Taking and collecting the child from social activities.

Examples of travel which the Department would expect to meet would include:

- Travel to and from school where the school is more than 1 mile from the foster home and where the child is not entitled to a school bus pass. Foster carers may claim the full cost of the journey in such circumstances.
- Transport to and from contact meetings.
- Attendance at reviews, case conferences and child protection meetings.
- The cost of travel to and from hospital and hospital parking where the child has a regular appointment with a hospital consultant or specialist
- Attendance at a training session provided by Wirral Fostering Service.

Where public transport is used, costs will be met in full. Car travel will be paid for at the rate of Wirral casual car user allowance rate of 38.7 pence per mile. All travel expenses should be submitted using the appropriate Departmental form and should be supported by receipts. Reimbursement cannot be made without the relevant receipts.

The cost of telephone calls will be covered by the payment of **£63** per annum per Foster Carer who has a child placed with them.

CARER'S LEAVE

A foster carer may take up to two weeks leave without the child(ren) they have placed with them, without loss of any fees. The fee rate will be based on the number of children in placement not the number of children the carer(s) are approved for.

If a carer takes leave of more than two weeks in the year without the child(ren) placed with them, the fees will not be paid for any period in excess of the two weeks.

“Salaried” carers are entitled to up to 4 weeks leave per annum.

Where carers take leave but have arranged for an approved third party to look after the foster children at the foster carers' home address the normal fee and allowance will be paid to the carer. It is the carers' responsibility to arrange appropriate financial support, for the approved third party they have chosen, from the fee and allowance paid by the Department. This applies even if the third party is also an approved foster carer.

CARER RESPITE

Fees will continue to be paid to carers whilst the child(ren) they care for are receiving respite care elsewhere if this is less than 3 days per week. Allowances would be payable pro rata for the days the child is with the carer.

In the case of Therapeutic and Fostering Changes (Salaried) Carers no allowance will be paid.

SITTING

Foster carers may claim for sitting costs to allow attendance at approved meetings and training events. Foster carers should obtain agreement to fund sitting costs from the Wirral Fostering Service Team Manager. This rate of payment is linked to the adult minimum wage. Those Carers who are “Salaried” do not qualify for the sitting allowance.

PART TWO – FEES

The Fostering Network report on Payments for Skills states: "The provision of a flexible professional service requires that the foster carers who are recruited must, after training, be able to demonstrate a range of basic skills which will meet the needs of children placed. However foster carers, in common with all other people, will continue to develop and grow, learning new skills and developing expertise. This should be encouraged". Fostering Network go on to recommend a scheme that allows carers to progress through levels, and on achieving each level, receive a higher rate of payment.

Wirral foster carers are rewarded through the payment of a fee that recognises the skills they have. This fee scheme allows carers to progress through 3 levels, and on achieving each level, receive a higher rate of payment. Each level is referred to as a band.

Fees are paid fortnightly in arrears. Payments are made for the day of the child's arrival in placement and for the day of departure.

Fees are payable in respect of each child placed.

It is the responsibility of the Wirral Fostering Service to ensure that children are matched and placed with the appropriately banded foster carer to meet the child's needs.

Where a child presents behaviour previously unknown to Wirral Fostering Service, which in the opinion of the service would normally require them to be placed with a higher banded foster carer and a move is deemed inappropriate by the Service, the Service Manager for Looked after Children may authorise a higher fee to be paid in respect of the child. This is subject to regular review by the Service Manager for Looked After Children who will also agree the frequency of subsequent reviews.

Band One

These carers include newly approved carers and all carers who through choice did not wish to progress up the structure. They will have completed pre-approval training, been assessed and approved via the Fostering Panel. They will also have agreed to complete core training within two years of the initial approval.

Carers will receive:

The age related fostering allowance and Payment of a skill fee of **£55.23** per week per child placed.

Band Two

Carers wishing to move to this level of payment will have completed induction and core training and demonstrated the ability to offer skills at an appropriate

level. They will have been assessed as having demonstrated a quality of care and will be able to take on more challenging placements. Carers will receive:

The age related fostering allowance and Payment of a skill fee of **£82.81** per week per child placed.

Band Three

Band 3 carers will normally have progressed through the structure, having achieved Band 2 status and demonstrated the appropriate skills. Carers will be trained to NVQ Level 3 Caring for Children and Young People or equivalent. They will have substantial experience and have demonstrated their commitment to developing the service. Band 3 carers are expected to be available to care for a child at any time, i.e. any employment they may have would not prevent them from caring for a child when required to do so. Carers would be expected to contribute to the development of the service for other carers. It may be possible for carers to enter the structure at Band 3 if they have a qualification equivalent to NVQ Level 3 or are deemed capable and willing to achieve the NVQ Level 3 within 2 years of approval and there is sufficient demand for Band 3 Carers. Carers will receive:

The age related fostering allowance and Payment of a skill fee of **£138.04** per week per child placed.

“Salaried Carers”

There are a small number of children who can be placed with foster carers but who require a level of support that could not be provided if other children were to be placed with the carer. Young people are identified for placement with treatment foster carers by the Independent Placement Panel and the placements are for young people with complex needs where it is identified these needs are would be best met through placement on their own with an intensive support package.

“Salaried” carers are not employed by the Wirral Fostering Service. As for all other foster carers, they are self employed.

If “Salaried” Carers cease to be able to foster because of ill health, they will continue to receive their fee for up to 1 month after the date on which their last placement ended. Carers would be expected to provide self certification for the first 7 days of illness and, if necessary, a medical certificate from their GP for the further three weeks.

Remand Foster Carers

The Wirral Youth Offending Service has a requirement for a small number of Remand foster carers. These are approved foster carers who are willing and able to provide care to children and young people who are on remand pending the outcome of their criminal court case. Due to the short notice these carers may receive of a child being placed with them and the possibly challenging nature of

these children the Wirral Youth Offending Service will pay, via the Wirral Fostering Service, the Band 3 fee to these carers for children in placement.

Children with Disabilities

The placing of children with disabilities with foster carers will be based on the four categories for eligibility for services (see eligibility criteria below).

All foster carers will be approached to care for children with low or moderate disabilities and will be provided with the appropriate support to do so. Children with substantial needs would normally be placed with Band 2 Carers and children with critical disabilities will usually be cared for only by foster carers that have reached Band 3 and would be in receipt of additional services.

Fair access to care services category	Threshold criteria	Services which may be being provided
Critical	Child and family experiencing immediate and major difficulties which may be life threatening / pose significant risks of injury	Social work support Joint-funded package of support Specialist psychology support Family support planned support package Residential short breaks / 35 days + / shared care Financial support with property modifications
Substantial	Child and family would experience significant pressures which may unless supported adequately result in need for long term provision	Social work support Low level joint-funded package of support Residential short breaks 14-35 days Home-based care – sitting provision Direct Payment Playscheme provision Occupational therapy assessment for adaptations and equipment
Moderate	Child and family experiencing difficulties which significantly impair their ability to lead an independent life.	Direct Payment – low level Signposting to voluntary organisations / parenting support Playscheme provision
Low	Child and family would benefit from support to enhance their quality of life.	Signposting to voluntary organisations

Progression through the Bands

Carers may progress through the Bands to Band 2 or 3 as they acquire skills. Any carer wishing to move bands should notify their link supervising social worker. Only one request in each financial year will normally be considered. The carer will be asked to provide a portfolio of evidence – a ‘Personal Development Portfolio (PDP)’ - to support their application, and the supervising social worker will make a recommendation in relation to their application.

The carer’s PDP and the annual review report will be considered by the Progression Panel for a decision. Appeals against decisions will be considered by the relevant Principal Manager.

The skills required to achieve each of the different band levels are described below. Those described for Band 1 are met by all approved foster carers, as it is against these criteria that foster carers are now assessed. The skills listed for Band 2 and 3 foster carers will be required to demonstrate by providing simple examples of work they have already undertaken with children and their families and other associated evidence.

The number of carers eligible to progress from Band 1 to 2 and Band 2 to 3 is linked to the Children’s Commissioning Strategy, i.e. informed by the complexity of needs of the children requiring placement.

BAND 1

Band One carers include newly approved carers and all carers who, through choice, do not wish to progress to a different Band. They will have completed pre-approval training and been assessed and approved via the Fostering Panel. The ability to meet the criteria for Band One will have been part of the assessment and will continue to be assessed at their annual review. Band One carers who wish to remain on Band One will be required to show they continue to meet the required minimum standards set out below.

Caring for children

1.01 An ability to provide a good standard of care to other people’s children which promotes healthy emotional, physical and sexual development, and also promotes children’s educational achievement. This includes:

- The ability to personally transport or otherwise ensure children get to where they need to be at all times without the use of departmental transport or local authority personnel. It is expected that only in exceptional circumstances will the use of departmental transport be required e.g. where foster children have been placed in the same home but need to be in different locations at the same time, or the carer has an unexpected emergency. The use of departmental transport will therefore be kept under close review with the expectation that, in the vast majority of cases, it will only be needed for a short period of time.

- The ability to ensure that children placed have full attendance at school, are not taken out of school for appointments/meetings that should be scheduled for outside school hours, and identify factors which inhibit full school attendance.
 - The ability to contribute to, and complete tasks for, life history work with children – including providing photographs of important events whilst the children are placed.
 - The ability to promote healthy lifestyles including promoting physical activity and healthy eating for the child.
- 1.02 An ability to work closely with children’s families and others who are important to the child.
- 1.03 An ability to set appropriate boundaries and manage children’s behaviour within these, without the use of physical or other inappropriate punishment.
- 1.04 Knowledge of normal child development and an ability to listen to and communicate with children appropriate to their age and understanding.
- 1.05 Provide access to a computer, arrangements should be made to ensure that the child cannot access inappropriate material via the computer and is appropriately supervised.

Providing a safe and caring environment

- 1.06 An ability to ensure that the children are cared for in a home where they are safe from harm or abuse.
- 1.07 An ability to help children keep themselves safe from harm or abuse, and to know how to seek help if their safety is threatened. This will include helping them keep themselves safe on the internet.
- 1.08 The ability to keep required records up to date for each child placed – including diary sheets, medical appointments, administration of medicine and treatment, Schedule 7 & 8 forms.

Working as part of a team

- 1.09 An ability to work with other professional people and contribute to the department’s planning for the child/young person, including:
- The ability to be a key contributor to PEPs, leisure plans, health plans and care plans
 - The ability to complete tasks identified as the responsibility of the foster carers in all plans concerning the child, e.g. Personal Education Plans (PEPs), leisure plans, health plans and care plans.

- The ability to contribute to, and complete tasks for, Assessment and Action Records.
- 1.10 An ability to communicate effectively
- 1.11 An ability to keep information confidential
- 1.12 A commitment to promoting equality, diversity and the rights of individuals and groups within society.

Own Development

- 1.13 An ability to appreciate how personal experiences have affected themselves and their families, and the impact that fostering is likely to have on themselves and their wider family and friendship networks.
- 1.14 An ability to develop links within the community which provide support.
- 1.15 An ability to use training opportunities and to improve skills in fostering.
- 1.16 An ability to sustain positive relationships and maintain effective functioning through periods of stress.
- 1.17 The understanding of how to use a computer and use the internet in order to ensure that children are supported in using computer technology to complete homework and develop computer skills, whilst at the same time being sufficiently aware of how to keep children safe during these activities.
- 1.18 The ability to work with schools and other education staff to ensure that children who have difficulties in school, or who have not been attending regularly, can access education suitable for their needs.

Band Two

Carers wishing to move to this level of payment will have completed induction and core training and demonstrated the ability to offer skills at an appropriate level. They will have been assessed as having demonstrated a quality of care and will be able to take on more challenging placements.

All Band 2 foster carers must meet the requirements as set out in the Band 1 skills profile. In addition, they must be able to offer the following skills 2.01 to 2.12 and four of the remaining six (2.13 to 2.18).

All required

- 2.01 An ability to help children develop appropriate social behaviour, helping them to become more independent, and enabling them to cope with their emotions as appropriate to their age and ability.
- 2.02 An ability to assist children develop basic aspects of memory, thinking, imagination and manipulative skills through play etc.

- 2.03 An ability to help children develop their language skills and general self-expression.
- 2.04 An ability to help children learn the boundaries of acceptable behaviour without resorting to physical punishment, and within the limits of current policy, handle children's negative reactions, naughtiness, and unacceptable behaviour, and encourage positive behaviour patterns.
- 2.05 An ability to plan for and provide a varied and appropriate routine for children which balances the child's needs, including those of play and learning, and set goals which can be achieved by the child in order to enhance their development.
- 2.06 An ability to observe and respond appropriately to the possibility of child abuse and neglect.
- 2.07 An ability to observe and assess children, and to clearly record these observations and assessments on a regular basis.
- 2.08 An ability to challenge, appropriately, to ensure that foster care practice is anti-discriminatory and respects all children and their families, and advocate on behalf of children.
- 2.09 The ability to demonstrate an understanding of each child's aptitudes, talents and preferences, including where these have not previously been identified, and provide the necessary support for each child to reach their potential in these areas. Also to identify any factors that may be inhibiting the development of their potential in these areas and seek to overcome them.
- 2.10 The ability to attend meetings about the child without their supervising social worker and effectively communicate the children's needs in a positive and professional manner, and report back details reliably and accurately during supervision with their supervising social worker.
- 2.11 The ability to work with the whole range of education staff including school-based staff to ensure the child accesses education in a way that can meet the child's needs.
- 2.12 The provision of a computer within the home that the foster child is able to access in order to develop their computer skills and complete homework as required by the school curriculum. Arrangements should be made to ensure that the child cannot access inappropriate material via the computer and is appropriately supervised.

Four elements of the following (2.13 to 2.18) are also required:

- 2.13 An ability to help children and families cope with loss and bereavement – this may be because of life-threatening illnesses, separation through adoption, or loss of their family.

- 2.14 An ability to work closely with other professionals in carrying out individual therapeutic programmes, skills development, behaviour modification, or educational programmes with children.
- 2.15 An ability to work closely with other professionals, sharing information, exchanging skills, and working under the guidance or in collaboration with others involved with the child.
- 2.16 An ability to identify own training needs.
- 2.17 An ability and willingness to assist at training events.
- 2.18 To be an active participant in the recruitment of other carers.

Band Three

Band 3 carers will normally have progressed through the structure, having achieved Band 2 status and demonstrated the appropriate skills. All Band 3 foster carers must meet the requirements as set out in the Bands 1 and 2 skills profile. In addition, carers will be trained to NVQ Level 3 Caring for Children and Young People. They will have substantial experience and have demonstrated their commitment to developing the service. Band 3 carers are expected to be available to care for a child at any time, i.e. any employment they may have would not prevent them from caring for a child when required to do so. Carers are expected to contribute to the development of the service or other carers. It may be possible for carers to enter the structure at Band 3 if they have a qualification equivalent to NVQ Level 3 or are deemed capable and willing to achieve the NVQ Level 3 within 2 years of approval by the panel.

Whilst carers are expected to take placements within their approval range, they may refuse inappropriate placements. A carer review will be completed if a Band 3 carer refused to take a placement which was regarded by the Fostering Service as appropriate.

All Band 3 foster carers must meet the requirements as set out in Bands 1 and 2 skill profiles. In addition they should be able to offer the following, of which criteria 3.01 to 3.07 are core, four of the remaining six (3.08 to 3.13) must also be demonstrated.

All required:

- 3.01 Have proven relevant child care experience which would include fostering, or employment in working with children.
- 3.02 At least one foster carer in the household has achieved a professional qualification of NVQ Level 3 in Health and Social Care (Children and Young people) or equivalent, or holds another relevant qualification such as a PGCE, RGN, DipSw or is in the process of completing the NVQ Level 3 within the 2 year time limit following approval at panel.

- 3.03 Be able to accept and deal with children / young people assessed as presenting behaviour which causes serious management problems.
- 3.04 Maintain an awareness and knowledge of current legislation and current issues in child care and good practice.
- 3.05 An ability to take responsibility for individual programmes of skills development for children, and work with them and their parents and other professionals to achieve the goals of the programmes.
- 3.06 The ability to undertake the role of an 'Appropriate Adult' (as defined by The Police and Criminal Evidence Act) when a child has been arrested, and is being questioned under caution at a police station.
- 3.07 The ability to care for children with complex needs that meet the substantial and/or critical criteria for support from the Children with Disabilities service. This will include liaison with all relevant services and agencies that are contributing to meeting the child's needs e.g. health, education, social care to ensure all aspects of the care package are functioning together well.

Four elements of 3.08 to 3.13 are also required:

- 3.08 Be able, in conjunction with the agency, to take a key role in training other carers.
- 3.09 Be able to offer support to carers on a formal basis e.g. mentoring, foster care co-ordinator's role.
- 3.10 Have the ability and willingness to take part in intensive therapeutic work with children with appropriate supervision and consultation.
- 3.11 Be able, where requested and planned, to work with children and families to avoid removal of children from their home environment.
- 3.12 Have the ability and willingness to supervise contact visits, where it is not deemed safe or desirable for contact to occur without a third party, and where it cannot happen in the foster home.
- 3.13 Take responsibility for seeking out training appropriate for own needs.

There is no expectation that carers would undertake all these tasks at the same time. They will, however, have to demonstrate their ability to undertake them and be available and willing to do so depending upon the demands of placements. This approach does allow some carers to move to a supportive, training role in relation to other carers, whilst some will choose to develop their child care skills. If the Fostering Service is not using a particular carer's skills this does not signify that the carer should lose the Band 3 payment. It is the agency's responsibility to use carers' skills appropriately.

Evidence requirements

Foster carers should start compiling a portfolio of evidence. The evidence will assist the annual review process for each foster carer. If a carer applies to progress to a higher Band, this portfolio of evidence, alongside the annual review documentation will be considered by the Progression Panel. The Panel consists of a Service Manager, an Independent Reviewing Officer, and the Team Manager for the Fostering Service. The evidence will also contribute towards achieving an NVQ (note evidence cannot be older than 2 years for assessments of units in an NVQ).

The types of evidence that would be useful are as follows:

- Certificates of qualifications
- Attendance at training and other events with supportive certification
- Letters from and to professionals
- School reports
- Evidence of the carers' contribution to plans and programmes for children

The attached evidence sheets can be completed by the foster carer as each criterion is met and then signed and dated by the supervising social worker. Each piece of evidence should be numbered and entered on the evidence sheet (a suggested evidence sheet is attached in Annex A).

Removal from a Band

Voluntary Removal from a Band

A foster carer may ask to be moved to a lower Band at any point during their career, if they feel that they are unable to fulfil the duties required of them on their present Band.

Enforced Removal from a Band

At the foster carers' Annual Review they will be assessed to ensure that they have the necessary skills and are able to meet the demands of the band they are in. If, in the opinion of the Independent Reviewing Officer, a foster carer fails to meet the required standards, a report outlining the reasons for this opinion should be submitted for consideration by the Service Manager for Looked After Children for approval.

If a foster carer refuses to carry out tasks and duties that are considered reasonable by the Wirral Fostering Service, a review will be carried out in order for an opinion to be formed by the Independent Reviewing Officer. A report should be submitted for consideration by the Service Manager for Looked After Children who will make a decision either approving removal from the band or the foster carer remaining on the band.

Appeals against decisions in both these cases will be considered by the Principal Manager.

Foster carers who are returned to panel and have their registration withdrawn will automatically cease to receive a fee.

Allegations Against Carers

If a carer becomes the subject of allegations that leads to a child being removed from their care pending the outcome of an investigation, they will still be able to receive their fees but the allowance for the child will cease for as long as the child is not with them.

Part Three – Replacement of previous schemes

This section deals with the method that will be adopted in ending previous schemes and arrangements following the implementation of parts one and two of this guide.

Teenage Fostering Scheme

It is the intention of the Wirral Fostering Service to amalgamate Teenage Fostering into the Band 3 Fees scheme previously outlined. In order to do this those foster carers currently on the Teenage Fee Scheme will be given priority in taking up the available training places for the NVQ Level 3 Caring for Children and Young People training over the next 3 years.

Recruitment to the Teenage Fee Scheme will cease with the implementation of the Fee Scheme outlined above. Those foster carers currently under going training for the Teenage Scheme will be entered into the scheme upon successful completion of their training and approval by the Fostering Panel.

The difference in Fee payments between the Band 3 Scheme and the Teenage Scheme will be addressed by halting payment of the annual cost of living increase to the Teenage Scheme until such time as both Fee Schemes pay equally.

Teenage foster carers will be subject to review as are all foster carers. If, in the opinion of the Reviewing Officer, a Teenage foster carer fails to meet the required standards a report outlining the reasons for this opinion should be submitted for consideration by the panel.

Enhancements

The current scheme of enhancements will be phased out. An enhancement has been paid in the past to take account of the additional time some children require from a foster carer in respect of their needs. Foster carers who look after children who have been assessed as requiring additional support receive a percentage of the basic allowance in addition to the normal allowance.

With the introduction of the Fee Scheme the special needs of a child are taken into account within the Banding Scheme. Therefore the payment of new enhancements will cease upon implementation.

Those foster carers who were previously not on a fee but receiving an enhancement will continue to do so, for example, if the value of a Band 1 fee is less than the value of the enhancement, whilst the child attracting the

enhancement remains in placement. If the value of the fee is worth more than the value of an enhancement the foster carer will receive a fee in place of the enhancement.

Back-dated payments in year one will take account of the amount previously paid in enhancement where a carer is moving to a fee in place of the enhancement.

Should the foster carer progress to Band 2 or 3 in the second year of the running of the scheme and the value of a Band 2 or 3 fee is more than the value of the enhancement, the enhancement will cease to be paid.

Additional Laundry Allowance

An allowance has previously been paid to take account of additional laundry. Following the implementation of the Fee Scheme this allowance will cease.

School Uniform Allowance

An allowance of £75 has been payable to cover the expense of the provision of a new school uniform for those children entering secondary school. With the increase in the Initial Clothing allowance in all age ranges and the increases made in the basic allowance this allowance will cease from the implementation of this payment scheme.

	Band 1 All elements required	Evidence suggested	How achieved (to be completed by foster carer)	Evidence Reference number	Signed (completed by supervising social worker)	Date
Caring for children						
1.01	An ability to provide a good standard of care to other people's children which promotes healthy, emotional, physical and sexual development as well as their health and educational achievement.	Development and achievements of children in foster care				
		Personally transporting or otherwise ensuring children get to where they need to be at all times without the use of departmental transport or local authority personnel.				
		Children placed have full attendance at school, are not taken out of school for appointments/meetings that should be scheduled for outside school hours, and factors identified which inhibit full school attendance.				

	Band 1 All elements required	Evidence suggested	How achieved (to be completed by foster carer)	Evidence Reference number	Signed (completed by supervising social worker)	Date
		Contributing to and completing tasks for life history work with children – including providing photographs of important events whilst the children are placed.				
		The ability to promote healthy lifestyles including promoting physical activity and healthy eating for the child.				
1.02	An ability to work closely with children’s families, and others who are important to the child.	Details of contact arrangements.				
1.03	An ability to set appropriate boundaries, and manage children’s behaviour within these, without the use of physical or other inappropriate punishment.	Details of behaviour management				
1.04	Knowledge of normal child development and an ability to listen to and communicate with children appropriate to their age and understanding.	Attendance at ongoing training regarding child development, communication skills etc Observation of communication with children				

	Band 1 All elements required	Evidence suggested	How achieved (to be completed by foster carer)	Evidence Reference number	Signed (completed by supervising social worker)	Date
1.05	Provide access to a computer, arrangements should be made to ensure that the child cannot access inappropriate material via the computer and is appropriately supervised.	Demonstrate access to a PC either within the home or via libraries, after school clubs, community centres etc.				
Providing a safe and caring environment						
1.06	An ability to ensure that the children are cared for in a home where they are safe from harm or abuse.	Ongoing training on health & safety, child protection etc Inspection of house for safety Safety certificates				
1.07	An ability to help children keep themselves safe from harm or abuse, and to know how to seek help if their safety is threatened.	Ongoing training on health & safety, child protection etc Testimony from children.				
1.08	The ability to keep required records up to date for each child placed – including diary sheets, medical appointments, administration of medicine and treatment, Schedule 7 & 8 forms.	Record sheets				

	Band 1 All elements required	Evidence suggested	How achieved (to be completed by foster carer)	Evidence Reference number	Signed (completed by supervising social worker)	Date
Working as part of a team						
1.09	<p>An ability to work with other professional people and contribute to the department's planning for the child/young person, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to be a key contributor to PEPs, leisure plans, health plans and care plans • The ability to complete tasks identified as the responsibility of the foster carers in all plans concerning the child, e.g. Personal Education Plans (PEPs), leisure plans, health plans and care plans. • The ability to contribute to, and complete tasks for, Assessment and Action Records. 	<p>Assessment and Action Records.</p> <p>Contributions to plans concerning the child, e.g. Personal Education Plans (PEPs), leisure plans, health plans and care plans.</p> <p>Contributions to PEPs, leisure plans, health plans and care plans</p>				
1.10	An ability to communicate effectively	Observation by supervising social worker and other professionals				

	Band 1 All elements required	Evidence suggested	How achieved (to be completed by foster carer)	Evidence Reference number	Signed (completed by supervising social worker)	Date
1.11	An ability to keep information confidential	Ongoing training Observation by supervising social worker				
1.12	A commitment to promoting equality, diversity and the rights of individuals and groups within society.	Ongoing training Observation supervising social worker Development of children in their care				
Own Development						
1.14	An ability to appreciate how personal experiences have affected themselves and their families, and the impact that fostering is likely to have on themselves and their wider family and friendship networks.	Observation supervising social worker Personal testimony				
1.15	An ability to develop links within the community which provide support.	Observation supervising social worker Witness testimonies Attendance at events Attendance at Wirral foster carers events				
1.16	An ability to use training opportunities and to improve skills in fostering.	Training attendance Certificates of achievements				

	Band 1 All elements required	Evidence suggested	How achieved (to be completed by foster carer)	Evidence Reference number	Signed (completed by supervising social worker)	Date
1.17	An ability to sustain positive relationships and maintain effective functioning through periods of stress.	Observation supervising social worker				
1.18	The understanding of how to use a computer and use the internet in order to ensure that children are supported in using computer technology to complete homework and develop computer skills, whilst at the same time being sufficiently aware of how to keep children safe during these activities.	Certificates for IT qualifications Knowledge of IT safety measures				
1.19	The ability to work with schools and other education staff to ensure that children who have difficulties in school, or who have not been attending regularly, can access education suitable for their needs.	Evidence from LACES, other education professionals Examples of dealing with any difficulties				

	Band 2	Evidence suggested	How achieved (to be completed by foster carer)	Evidence reference number	Signed completed by	Date
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					supervising social worker	
Core elements required						
2.01	An ability to help children develop appropriate social behaviour, helping them to become more independent, and enabling them to cope with their emotions as appropriate to their age and ability.	Child and young person's development. School reports. Observation child's social worker.				
2.02	An ability to assist children develop basic aspects of memory, thinking, imagination and manipulative skills through play etc.	School reports Photographs of play activities Observation by supervising social worker				
2.03	An ability to help children develop their language skills, and general self-expression.	Child development School reports Observation by supervising social worker				
2.04	An ability to help children learn the boundaries of acceptable behaviour without resorting to physical punishment, and within the limits of current policy, handle children's negative reactions,	Dealing with challenging behaviour School reports Observation supervising social worker				

	Band 2	Evidence suggested	How achieved (to be completed by foster carer)	Evidence reference number	Signed completed by supervising social worker	Date
	naughtiness, and unacceptable behaviour, and encourage positive behaviour patterns.	Ongoing training attendance				
2.05	An ability to plan for and provide a varied and appropriate routine for children which balances the child's needs, including those of play and learning, and set goals which can be achieved by the child in order to enhance their development.	Example plans				
2.06	An ability to observe and respond appropriately to the possibility of child abuse and neglect.	Ongoing training Contributions to any reporting/investigations				
2.07	An ability to observe and assess children, and to clearly record these observations and assessments on a regular basis.	Records of observations/ assessments etc. Observation by supervising social worker				
2.08	An ability to challenge, appropriately, to ensure that foster care practice is anti-discriminatory and respects all children and their families, and	Observation by supervising social worker Evidence from any incidents e.g. reporting on racist abuse				

	Band 2	Evidence suggested	How achieved (to be completed by foster carer)	Evidence reference number	Signed completed by supervising social worker	Date
	advocate on behalf of children.					
2.09	The ability to demonstrate an understanding of each child's aptitudes, talents and preferences, including where these have not previously been identified, and provide the necessary support for each child to reach their potential in these areas. Also to identify any factors that may be inhibiting the development of their potential in these areas and seek to overcome them.	Child development Observation by supervising social worker, or children's social worker				
2.10	The ability to attend meetings about the child without their supervising social worker and effectively communicate the children's needs in a positive and professional manner, and report back details reliably and accurately during supervision with their supervising social worker.	Records of meetings Observation by supervising social worker				
2.11	The ability to work with the whole range of education staff including school-based staff to	School reports Letters from other professionals				

	Band 2	Evidence suggested	How achieved (to be completed by foster carer)	Evidence reference number	Signed completed by supervising social worker	Date
	ensure the child accesses education in a way that can meet the child's needs.					
2.13	The provision of a computer within the home that the foster child is able to access in order to develop their computer skills and complete homework as required by the school curriculum. Arrangements should be made to ensure that the child cannot access inappropriate material via the computer and is appropriately supervised.	Fully functioning computer in home. Carers having attended training on safe internet use. Carers' aware of online advice re: internet usage safety.				
Four elements of the following 2.13 to 2.18 required:						
2.13	An ability to help children and families cope with loss and bereavement – this may be because of life-threatening illnesses, separation through adoption, or loss of their family.	Personal testimony Witness testimonies Training				
2.14	An ability to work closely with other professionals in carrying out individual therapeutic programmes, skills	Letters, records relating to any programmes.				

	Band 2	Evidence suggested	How achieved (to be completed by foster carer)	Evidence reference number	Signed completed by supervising social worker	Date
	development, behaviour modification, or educational programmes with children.	Witness testimonies.				
2.15	An ability to work closely with other professionals, sharing information, exchanging skills, and working under the guidance or in collaboration with others involved with the child.	Records of meetings with other professionals. Observations by other professionals				
2.16	An ability to identify own training needs.	Training attendance Observation supervising social worker				
2.17	An ability and willingness to assist at training events.	Contribution to training events				
2.18	To be an active participant in the recruitment of other carers.	Attendance at events Foster carers assisted in recruiting				

	Band 3	Evidence suggested	How achieved (to be completed by foster carer)	Evidence reference number	Signed completed by supervising social worker	Date
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	Band 3	Evidence suggested	How achieved (to be completed by foster carer)	Evidence reference number	Signed completed by supervising social worker	Date
All elements required						
3.01	Have proven relevant child care experience which would include fostering, or employment in working with children.	Reference from fostering agency (if not Wirral) or previous employer				
3.02	At least one foster carer in the household has achieved a professional qualification of NVQ Level 3 in Health and Social Care (Children and Young people) or equivalent, or holds another relevant qualification such as a PGCE, RGN, DipSw or is in the process of completing the NVQ Level 3 within the 2 year time limit following approval at panel.	Certificates for qualifications, proof of registration and attendance at recognised course or the NVQ Portfolio indicates progress				
3.03	Be able to accept and deal with children / young people assessed as presenting behaviour which causes serious management problems.	Profile of children fostered				
3.04	Maintain an awareness and	Attendance at training				

	Band 3	Evidence suggested	How achieved (to be completed by foster carer)	Evidence reference number	Signed completed by supervising social worker	Date
	knowledge of current legislation and current issues in child care and good practice.	Contribution to Wirral foster carers meetings Observation supervising social worker				
3.05	An ability to take responsibility for individual programmes of skills development for children, and work with them and their parents and other professionals to achieve the goals of the programmes.	Information relating to specific programmes Training events				
3.06	The ability to undertake the role of an 'Appropriate Adult' (as defined by The Police and Criminal Evidence Act) when a child has been arrested, and is being questioned under caution at a police station.	Examples of undertaking the role				
3.07	The ability to care for children with complex needs that meet the substantial and/or critical criteria for support from the Children with Disabilities service. This will include liaison with	Profile of children cared for.				

	Band 3	Evidence suggested	How achieved (to be completed by foster carer)	Evidence reference number	Signed completed by supervising social worker	Date
	all relevant services and agencies that are contributing to meeting the child's needs e.g. health, education, social care to ensure all aspects of the care package are functioning together well.					
Four elements of 3.08 to 3.13 required						
3.08	Be able, in conjunction with the agency, to take a key role in training other carers.	Contribution to training events				
3.09	Be able to offer support to carers on a formal basis e.g. mentoring, foster care co-ordinator's role.	Witness testimony/letters from other foster carers				
3.10	Have the ability and willingness to take part in intensive therapeutic work with children with appropriate supervision and consultation.	Examples of work therapeutic work undertaken (plans, letters)				
3.11	Be able, where requested and planned, to work with children and families to avoid removal of children from their home environment.	Observation from social worker				
3.12	Have the ability and willingness to supervise					

	Band 3	Evidence suggested	How achieved (to be completed by foster carer)	Evidence reference number	Signed completed by supervising social worker	Date
	contact visits, where it is not deemed safe or desirable for contact to occur without a third party, and where it cannot happen in the foster home.	Letters relating to contact Observation from social worker				
3.13	Take responsibility for seeking out training appropriate for own needs.	Training course attendance Observation supervising social worker				