

Wirral Adoption Financial Support Policy

(according to The Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005)

- 1.1 Adopters are generally people who have applied to the local authority because they wish to begin or extend their family through adopting a child that is not known to them. The local authority recognises that some children and young people may have specific additional needs that will require financial support. Therefore Wirral Council will ensure that the needs of the adopted child are supported appropriately.
- 1.2 Once children are placed for adoption families will become eligible to claim new state benefits such as child benefit, and child tax credit. Therefore wherever possible, families are expected to be financially independent from council support for the day to day costs of a child.

2. Eligibility

- 2.1 Financial support may be payable to an adoptive parent for the purpose of supporting the placement of the adoptive child or the continuation of adoption arrangements after an adoption order is made.
- 2.2 Financial support can only be provided in the following circumstances (according to The Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005 Regulation 8):
 - (a) where it is necessary to ensure that the adoptive parent can look after the child;
 - (b) where the child needs special care which requires greater expenditure of resources by reason of illness, disability, emotional or behavioural difficulties or the continuing consequences of past abuse or neglect;
 - (c) where it is necessary for the local authority to make any special arrangements to facilitate the placement or the adoption by reason of—
 - (i) the age or ethnic origin of the child; or
 - (ii) the desirability of the child being placed with the same adoptive parent as his brother or sister (whether of full or half-blood) or with a child with whom he previously shared a home;
 - (d) where such support is to meet recurring costs in respect of travel for the purpose of visits between the child and a related person;
 - (e) where the local authority consider it appropriate to make a contribution to meet the following kinds of expenditure:
 - (i) expenditure on legal costs, including fees payable to a court in relation to an adoption;
 - (ii) expenditure for the purpose of introducing an adoptive child to his adoptive parent;
 - (iii) expenditure necessary for the purpose of accommodating and maintaining the child, including the provision of furniture and domestic equipment, alterations to and adaptations of the home, provision of means of transport and provision of clothing, toys and other items necessary for the purpose of looking after the child.

- 2.3 Financial support can be a single payment, payment in instalments or periodic payments for recurring expenditure. The decision about the type of financial support required to meet the needs of individual children (according to the criteria in 2.2) will be made by the Agency Decision Maker.
- 2.4 Financial support may be agreed at the time that a child's placement plan is presented to the adoption panel or at any time up until the child's 18th birthday as long as the criteria listed in 2.2. are met.

3. Introductions and setting up grants

- 3.1 The local authority will consider providing the following financial support to families to enable the introduction of a prospective adopted child to the prospective adopters:
- Travel costs i.e. rail or coach fare or car mileage. The maximum travel costs will be public transport rates. Car mileage will be paid at 20p per mile.
 - Overnight accommodation. Where possible this should be arranged through the council procurement process. The rates allowed will be no greater than the subsistence rates for Wirral council employees
- 3.2 The local authority –can provide a 'setting up' grant for adopters matched with a child from Wirral according to the regional agreement (Adoption 22). This is currently £250 per child and may increase subject to the regional agreement changing.
- 3.3 Where the child has specific additional needs the local authority will consider paying for additional equipment above the 'setting up' grant.
- 3.4 The prospective adopters' financial circumstances will not be taken into account when the local authority makes a decision about providing financial support for 'introductions' and setting up grants.

4. Periodic payments.

- 4.1 Where the agency decision maker has decided that a child may require additional support through the provision of periodic payments the adoptive parents will be subject to a means test (based on the 'DFE means test') to assess if they have sufficient disposable income to provide for the child.
- 4.2 The means test will calculate the disposable income of the prospective adopters or adopters which takes into account income from earnings, all eligible benefits including child tax credit, and expenditure that includes housing costs and daily living expenses according to the 'DFE means test' guidance.
- 4.3 The maximum eligible periodic payment will be the local authority fostering allowance plus birthday, Christmas and holiday allowances consolidated into the weekly amount less child benefit.

- 4.4 Where the Agency Decision maker has decided that a child may require additional support through the provision of periodic payments and the adopters are in receipt of income support, income related Jobseekers Allowance, pension credit or income related Employment Support Allowance the maximum eligible periodic payment less child benefit will be provided without the requirement to undertake the means test.
- 4.5 Where the adopter was receiving fostering allowance for the child, as an approved foster carer, immediately prior to the Order, the child will continue to be considered to require additional support through the provision of periodic payments and the adoptive parents will be assessed according to the means test to determine the amount of the periodic payments. In addition, the adopters will continue to receive the skills fees (paid for that child prior to the order) for a period of 2 years. Payment of the skills fee beyond 2 years will only continue in exceptional circumstances.

5. Other payments

- 5.1 In addition to the periodic payments that are means tested the following financial support can be provided to support children as decided by the Agency Decision Maker according to the criteria in 2.2 which may not be means tested:
- Any legal costs associated with the application for an Adoption Order,
 - Costs for travel to facilitate contact between the child and a related person. The travel and subsistence rates will be the same as that detailed in 3.1 for introductions
 - any special arrangements to facilitate the placement or the adoption by reason of the age or ethnic origin of the child; or
 - any special arrangements to enable a child being placed with his siblings or with a child with whom he previously shared a home
 - A financial package for any special care relating to illness, disability, emotional or behavioural difficulties or the consequences of past abuse or neglect for any child that was previously looked after

6. Decision making

- 6.1 The Agency Decision Maker for Adoption will make a decision about what type of financial support individual children are eligible to receive.
- 6.2 The decision about the level of financial support, following the approval of the Agency Decision Maker, will be made by the Strategic Service Manager, Children's Resources following a recommendation by the LAC Service Manager.
- 6.3 The adopters or potential adopters will be informed of the proposed financial support and will have 28 days to make representations if they disagree with the proposal.
- 6.4 No periodic payments will start until the prospective adopters or adopters have agreed to inform the local authority of the following circumstances when financial support will cease:
- The child dies

- The child ceases to have a home with the adopters
- The child ceases full time education or training and commences employment
- The child qualifies for Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance or Employment Support Allowance in his or her own right
- The child attains the age of 18 unless she or he continues in full-time education or training, when the payments may continue until the end of the course or training that she or he is then undertaking

In addition the prospective adopters/adopters must inform the local authority of any change in their financial circumstances and change of address.

7. Reviews

- 7.1 All adopters receiving an adoption allowance or periodic payment will be subject to an annual review.
- 7.2 The local authority will write to the adopters to inform them of the decision of the review of the financial support and their reasons for any variation of the plan. Where the review leads to a reduction in allowance or termination of the allowance they receive, the case will be presented to permanence panel and any outcome will be shared in person with the adopters.
- 7.3 If as a result of the review the local authority is proposing to reduce or terminate the financial support, the local authority will write to the adopters to give them the opportunity to make representations within a 28 day period.

8. Appeals

- 8.1 The Director of Children's Services will consider any representations and make a decision whether to vary or terminate the payment, seek recovery overpayments or revise the financial support plan.

Adoption maximum periodic payments weekly 2011/12 rates

Age	Adoption Allowance rates based on fostering allowance	Less child benefit (assuming eldest child in family)	Maximum periodic payment 11/12
0 - 1yrs	£120.62	£20.30	£100.32
2 - 4yrs	£122.77	£20.30	£102.47
5 - 10yrs	£135.69	£20.30	£115.39
11 - 15yrs	£156.15	£20.30	£135.85
16+ yrs	£180.92	£20.30	£160.62