

Foster Carers Payment Scheme 2022-2023



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1. Introduction

This document outlines the scheme of allowances and payments to Foster Carers for Milton Keynes Council. A "Foster Carer" is:

- I. A person approved as a Foster Carer in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 or
- II. A Kinship Foster Carer who is temporarily approved in accordance with Regulation 24 of The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010.

The payments are reviewed annually each February and any changes made in April.

The document does not cover the situation where any carer subsequently obtains an Adoption, Child Arrangement or Special Guardianship Order. If such Orders are made, the fostering allowances will cease to apply and the respective allowance policy should be referred to.

All payments to Foster Carers are processed by the Fostering Team responsible for the supervision and support of the Foster Carer. The Fostering Service aims to ensure that Foster Carers receive their payment without delay and that exceptional claims are treated fairly. Carers should speak to their Supervising Social Worker about any payment request or query. They should not ask the child's Social Worker about payments as this may cause confusion and delay in payment. Where a Foster Carer's request for payment relating to a child's particular needs the Supervising Social Worker will liaise with the child's Social Worker about whether the payment is appropriate.

The budget covers all payments that are directly made to Foster Carers. Any additional expenditure on Looked After Children outside the fostering allowance remains the responsibility of the child's Social Worker. If the child's allocated worker is unsure of where the responsibility lies for a particular cost they should consult the Fostering Service.

Foster Carers are required to use the *Record of Expenditure Form* to demonstrate how the allowance has been used and what items of clothing or alternative items have been purchased. Pocket money, birthday and festival allowance should also be recorded on this form. This is required for audit purposes and to ensure that children and young people have received their full entitlement for each financial year and particularly when they move between placements. Foster Carers should retain receipts for their records as they may otherwise find themselves challenged by Milton Keynes Council and / or HMRC. Foster Carers are reminded that it is their responsibility to retain their remittance advice slips for tax purposes.

Foster Carers of young people aged 16 and over should ensure that the young person has sufficient suitable clothing for formal/interview situations, education and training or employment opportunities and for their future move into independent living.

PURPOSE:

To outline the criteria and process for the payment structure for Foster Carers approved by Milton Keynes Council.

KEY PRINCIPLES:

- ❖ To provide clarity of the criteria and process for the payment structure for approved Foster Carers
- ❖ To provide clarity to all relevant parties about the role and responsibilities for each level of Foster Carer
- ❖ To ensure fairness and transparency when determining and reviewing levels
- ❖ Carers must meet all the expectations and skills required of them at application or review before consideration for progression to another level.

2. Legislation Framework

- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2010
- National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011
- Fostering Services Regulations 2011
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations and Guidance 2015
- Fostering Regulations 2013
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Children and Families Act 2014

3. Foster Carer Payments – Brief Summary

Payment to Milton Keynes Foster Carers is split into two elements:

- A. Element A – Fostering Allowance**
- B. Element B – Professional Fee**
- C. Element C – Specialist Fees**

Element A – Fostering Allowance

All Milton Keynes Council Foster Carers receive the national minimum Fostering Allowance (Element A); this is paid to Foster Carers to cover all costs in relation to looking after individual children and young people. The Milton Keynes' Fostering Allowance is linked to the Department of Education National Minimum Fostering Allowance (South East Rate).

All Foster Carers receive an allowance for each child they foster. The amount depends on the age of the child and is paid per day or per week depending how long the child is in the care of a foster family.

The basic maintenance allowance is to cover food, clothing, pocket money, savings, a contribution towards housing costs such as household bills and other expenses associated with day-to-day living.

Foster Carers also receive set allowances to cover “additional costs” such as caring for a child over Christmas or another significant religious festival and the child’s birthday. When attending meetings or training, Foster Carers can also claim travel expenses against limits set by Milton Keynes Council (*see Section 6*).

Element B – Professional Fee

The Professional Fee is paid based on the Skills Scheme which is open to all Foster Carers including Kinship Carers who meet the criteria. Milton Keynes Council’s scheme has three tiers each of which has specific requirements (Tiers 0, 1 and 2).

Foster Carers are able to move from one tier to another if they meet the requirements and competencies for each tier upon application or at review, which will be considered by the Fostering and Permanence Panel.

In addition, should carers not continue to meet the requirements or competencies of the tier on which they are placed, they may move to another tier that best meets their circumstances following review and recommendation of Panel. Payments are paid for each child in placement.

Our family and friends’ carers will be receive a Tier 1 professional fee once they have been approved at Fostering Panel.

TIER 0 FOSTER CARERS:

Sometimes children and young people are placed in the care of friends and family (known as Kinship carers). These Kinship carers are given temporary approval under Regulation 24 of The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010. This tier applies to Foster Carers who have been assessed to meet the requirements of Regulation 24 and whose suitability will then need to be assessed in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 within 16 weeks (24 weeks in exceptional circumstances with agreement by the Service Director).

Foster Carers in this category will be entitled to the Fostering Allowance. In order to progress to the next level, Tier 0 Foster Carers will need to evidence that they have fully met the requirements and competencies for Tier 1 and the Panel process.

TIER 1 FOSTER CARERS:

Foster Carers whose suitability has been assessed in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011, recommended by Fostering and Permanence Panel and approved by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) are eligible for a Tier 1 Professional Fee and Fostering Allowances.

Tier 1 Foster Carers may progress to Tier 2 if they fully meet the requirements and competencies for Tier 2 and is agreed by the Fostering Service Manager and/or the Head of Corporate Parenting Service.

TIER 2 FOSTER CARERS:

Foster carers assessed as meeting all the requirements and competencies of Tier 2 are eligible for a Fostering Allowance and Professional Fee at tier 2 (subject to recommendation and approval by Team and/or Head of Service. In order to be eligible for a tier 2 Professional Fee foster carers need to have completed their TSD Standards and all mandatory training which includes; Principles and Values in Foster Care, Safer Care, Emergency First Aid, Attachment, Good Health for Children in Care, Promoting Education Achievement, Recording Practice and Allegations training. In order to remain on Tier 2 Foster Carers need to continually evidence that they fully meet the requirements and competencies of this tier.

Each year if foster carers do not meet training requirements and professional standards then they will return to tier 1

4. Element A – Fostering Allowances

4a. Milton Keynes Council Fostering Allowances (2022-2023):

Milton Keynes Fostering Allowances from 06 April 2022 (linked to Department of Education National Minimum Fostering Allowance, South East Rate: <https://www.gov.uk/foster-carers/help-with-the-cost-of-fostering>). All Foster Carers, irrespective of their tier will receive an allowance. Foster Carers are paid an allowance to meet the needs of the children/young people they are looking after.

Table 1
Milton Keynes Council Fostering Allowances (2022-2023)

Weekly Allowance			
0 – 4 age range	5 – 10 age range	11 – 15 age range	16 – 17 age range
Maintenance: £129.00	Maintenance: £139.00	Maintenance: 152.00	Maintenance: £176.00
Clothing: £17.00	Clothing: £18.00	Clothing: £22.00	Clothing: £25.00
Pocket Money £1.00	Pocket Money £6.00	Pocket Money £14.00	Pocket Money £20.00
Savings £10:00	Savings £10:00	Savings £10:00	Savings £10:00
Total: £157..00	Total: £173.00	Total: £198.00	Total: £231.00

4b. Staying Put and Supported Lodgings:

From the young person's 18th birthday they are no longer looked after and in care; therefore, Foster Carer allowances and children looked after allowances no longer apply. As such, and in order to assist with preparing for independence, young people are expected to take responsibility for some parts of the allowances Foster Carers previously provided.

Staying Put and Supported lodgings carers will receive the following per week:

Rent/Utilities	£118.57
Support	£103.10
Food	£36.09
Total:	£257.76

A young person can claim Housing Benefit and Income Support and their Personal Adviser is available to help.

4c. Parent and Child Placements:

When Parent and Child are Looked After:

The Foster Carer will receive the Fostering Allowances and Professional Fee in respect of both the parent and their child.

Where Child only Looked After – Parent 16+:

The Foster Carer will receive the Fostering Allowance and Professional Fee in respect of the child.

Where the parent is over 18 years but previously Looked After by the same carer Staying Put procedures apply.

Where the parent is over 18 years but not previously Looked After by the same carer a total of £270.34 will be paid. Where the parent is eligible to claim housing benefit and/or income support or is working they will make the same contribution as is required under Staying Put procedures.

Where the Parent only is Looked After (*The child is in the same placement but is not Looked After*):

The Foster Carer will receive the Fostering Allowance and Professional Fee in respect of the parent

In respect of the child the Foster Carer will receive:

- 50% of their professional fee.
- The full fostering allowances minus any benefits that the parent will receive in respect of their child.

In these circumstances the parent is responsible for the care and welfare of their child with the Foster Carer's role to support and offer advice. The placement should be underpinned by a clear placement plan that details financial arrangements and responsibilities in terms of purchasing items for the child and how the allowances/benefits will be managed between the parent and Foster Carer.

Where a parent returns to school she/he should be supported in claiming the 'Care to Learn' allowance. This can only be paid to the Foster Carer if s/he is a registered child minder and the amount will be deducted from any fostering allowances received.

5. Element B – Professional Fees

All Milton Keynes Council Tier 1 and Tier 2 Foster Carers are entitled to receive a Professional Fee. The Professional Fee is related to their skills level and the requirements for each Tier. These are detailed in Appendix 1.

Table 2

Milton Keynes Council Professional Fees (2021-2022)

Milton Keynes Council Professional Fees are for each child placed in line with their carer's approval.

Tier 1 Foster Carer	Tier 2 Foster Carer
£150.53 (7 nights)	£187.64 (7 nights)

Tier 0 Foster Carers are not entitled to receive a Professional Fee. If they meet the requirements for Tier 1 and approved by the Fostering and Permanence Panel and the Agency Decision Maker, they will progress to Tier 1 and be entitled to receive a Professionals Fee depending on their skills level.

6. Supplementary Allowances

6a. Holiday Allowances:

It is the expectation of Milton Keynes Council that Looked After Children and young people are included in family holidays. An allowance of **£300.00** per child, per annum can be requested by the Foster Carer.

6b. Birthday Allowances:

An additional allowance is provided to purchase a gift(s) for the child/young person's birthday and the minimum amount spent on a gift(s) is £50.00. There is flexibility and can be used as a contribution towards to cost of celebrations. This allowance will be paid for the last time on the young person's 18th birthday. These allowances are also linked to the Financial Support for Care Leavers policy.

0 – 4	£80.42
5 – 10	£98.98
11 – 15	£122.69
16 – 18	£157.74

Any purchases using this allowance should be noted on the carer's 'Record of Expenditure'. If the child moves from the placement once the allowance has been paid, the allowance should be passed to the new carer and recorded as such.

6c. Festival Allowances:

An additional allowance is provided to purchase a gift(s) for the child/young person's at Christmas or other religious festival and the minimum amount spent on a gift(s) is £50.00. There is flexibility and can be used as a contribution towards to cost of celebrations. The allowance can be used flexibly to cover more than one festival. This allowance will be paid for the last time before the young person's 18th birthday. These allowances are also linked to the Financial Support for Care Leavers policy.

0 – 4	£80.42
5 – 10	£98.98
11 – 15	£122.69
16 – 18	£157.74

Any purchases using this allowance should be noted on the carer's 'Record of Expenditure'. If the child moves from the placement once the allowance has been paid, the allowance should be passed to the new carer and recorded as such.

6d. Savings:

To support children to have savings we require £10.00 per week be saved on behalf of the child/young person. The Council are looking to take responsibility and ensure that savings for all children are taken at source and invested on behalf of the child within the child's Share Found account and overseen by Milton Keynes Council. The money will be made available to the child upon leaving care either direct as they turn 18 or to their carer if they leave care prior to their 18th birthday. This will commence once the child has been in

care for 12 months. Until this process is finalised carers' should continue to save this money on behalf of the child/young person.

Pocket Money:

Within the fostering allowance there should be an element for personal expenses, including pocket money for the child or young person. Children and young people have very different needs and the way in which the personal expenses are used will be different for each young person. They should also help children and young people develop the skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.

Depending on the understanding of the fostered child or young person, they should also be involved in discussion about how the personal expenses element of the fostering allowance should be managed and used.

Foster Carers have a role to educate the child and young people in their care about how to manage their money and budget and to encourage them to save for their future.

Pocket money should be a stated amount of money and the young person should be aware of this amount and be allowed to use this in whatever way they choose, with appropriate adult support and guidance. Supervision should be given to younger children and they should be encouraged to discuss how their money is being spent and to understand basic budgeting skills and about making choices whilst experiencing money handling at a young age. It is not normally expected that children aged less than 4 years will receive pocket money and this element of the allowance can be used to offset the additional cost of nappies.

Older children should be encouraged to start taking more responsibility for budgeting, which could include buying their own mobile phone top ups, paying for personal toiletries or funding activities. Saving for a larger item or trip could become part of the child's care plan and saving could be targeted for this purpose. As the young person starts to move towards independence then they could be encouraged to be purchasing goods for this purpose too.

Expected and suggested minimum pocket money is the following:

5 – 10	£4.50
11 – 15	£8.32
16 – 18	£11.42

We encourage openness and transparency regarding pocket money for child and young person and there should be a collaborative approach to how the money is being spent with the child's social worker and your supervising social worker.

If it is deemed that a young person is not spending their pocket money in a safe way, the professionals should collaboratively decide on other ways to manage and encourage appropriate spending.

6e. Bank Accounts:

Children and young people should have a bank account in the child's name and this should be set up and managed by Foster Carers in line with the decisions made from the Child Care Review process (typically at second Review following entry into Care). Setting up a bank/savings account is not always easy and different banks have a variety of regulations for this process. Foster Carers will need to research this to find the most suitable account for the requirements of the child/young person. Children must have access to their bank accounts, but Foster Carers need to support young people to build and retain funds so that they have money available to them when they become independent.

6f. Initial Clothing Allowance:

Children entering care may need additional clothes and an initial clothing allowance may be paid up to £250.00 and is paid at the discretion of the Fostering Team Manager. Any purchases using this allowance should be noted on the carer's 'Record of Expenditure'.

We would ask foster carers to keep an inventory of child's clothes so it helps when moving placements for new carers to know what the child may need.

6g. School, College, Work Uniform Allowance:

School uniform may be paid up to the rates shown below and are paid at the discretion of the Fostering Team Manager. Any purchases using this allowance should be noted on the carer's 'Record of Expenditure'.

Starting or Changing Primary School	£154.65
Starting Secondary School	£309.30
Changing Secondary School	£154.65
Starting Work/Uniform, College Allowance	£154.65
Contribution to Prom Expenses	£103.10

6h. Emergency Payment of Placement:

A payment of £100.00 will be paid to the Foster Carer for any placement made out of normal working hours.

6i. Travel Costs:

Where young people are transported by car to leisure activities, it is expected that Foster Carers will cover this cost from their Fostering Allowance. If a child has a particular talent or skill, and to undertake the activity requires extensive travel, this should be discussed with your Supervising Social Worker in order for travel expenses to be agreed.

Foster Carers are expected to provide travel for children as part of the fostering task. Where travel is directly related to the child being in Care or Foster Carer's development, this travel can be claimed for. For example:

- ❖ Education
- ❖ Foster Carer's Training Courses
- ❖ Family Contact
- ❖ Health Assessment Appointments (child and Foster Carer)
- ❖ Child Care Reviews
- ❖ PEPs
- ❖ Household Review and Panel Meetings

- ❖ Participation Events (including Youth Club)
- ❖ Fostering Recruitment, Retention, Engagement and Activity Events

Foster Carers will be reimbursed for mileage accrued at the rate of 45p per mile (HMRC rate). Foster Carers will be expected to deduct the first four miles of each day claimed on their Travel Expenses Form. (This has not been altered from the current Financial Policy 2014). The cost of travel by taxi or train should always be agreed by the Fostering Service prior to travel.

Example:

Date:	Reason for Transport:	Number of Miles:
Day 1	Child 1 – Home to School (Round Trip)	5
Day 1	Carer – Home to Training (Round Trip)	8
Day 1	Child 1 – Home to School (Round Trip)	5
Day 1	Child 2 – Home to Doctors (Round Trip)	3
Day 1	Child 1 – Home to Cubs (Round Trip)	6

Total Number of Miles:	27
	-4 miles (First 4 miles of the day)
	-6 miles (Journey to Cubs)
Total Number of Miles to be Claimed:	17

6j. Equipment:

It is expected that all Foster Carers have the necessary equipment in order to provide a foster placement in line with their approval. The agreement for purchasing any additional equipment will be considered on case by case basis and is subject to authorisation by the Fostering Team Manager or Head of Service. This will also be on the basis of a Purchase Order for preferred suppliers.

The Foster Carer will need to make any requests for additional equipment through their Supervising Social Worker for approval by the Fostering Team Manager or Head of Service.

6k. Other Expenses that Will Be Paid from the Fostering Allowance:

Other miscellaneous fees can be paid and these include the following (but this is not an exhaustive list). Any purchases using this allowance should be noted on the carer's 'Record of Expenditure'.

- The fostering allowance provides for the purchase of two items of luggage for children and young people for children who have been in placement for 3 months or more. All children/young people moving between placements or to independence must have appropriate personal luggage. The service has a stock of holdalls for emergencies.
- In general, it is expected that children would use toiletries provided by carers for general use. It is envisaged, however, that as children get older carers should provide them with toiletries of their choice within reason. Again, in order to encourage young people to budget as they get older, an allowance should be given to the young person in order for them to purchase their own toiletries.
- Carers are expected to pay for any school trips up to £20.00 per term from their fostering allowance. Costs over and above this may be claimed on exceptional expenditure via the Supervising Social

Worker. For longer trips and holidays a discussion needs to take place between the Supervising Social Worker and the child's Social Worker to decide on the appropriateness of the trip.

- Carers are expected to pay for up to two activities per week. If the child/young person participates in excess of two activities per week then the Fostering Service will consider paying for one other or sharing the cost of a more expensive activity.
- Education materials and related costs: Standard materials that are required for the child/young person's school attendance and activities are provided for within the fostering allowance. If specific major items are required Foster Carers should contact their Supervising Social Worker regarding payments for 'one-off' educational situations.
- The fostering allowance provides for the purchase of an annual set of standard school photographs (up to £15.00). If it is assessed by the Foster Carer/s, Supervising Social Worker and Social Worker that supplementary photographs are required a 'one-off' payment will be made by the Fostering Service.
- Nursery provision is available free for all children looked after aged 2 and 3 to a maximum of 15 hours per week. 3-year olds are also entitled to a Pupil Premium. We would encourage carers to take up this offer on behalf of the children in placement. Any other nursery provision will be based on the assessed needs of the child.

7. Foster Carers' Annual Leave Entitlement

Foster Carers approved at Tier 1 and above on 1 April each year will be paid an annual leave payment, calculated at 14 nights of Professional Fee.

Foster carers who decide to take annual leave at a maximum of 14 nights per year, will continue to receive professional fee, but fostering Maintenance allowance will not be paid during this time.

This payment is automatically processed in early July each year and will be received by carers by the end of July.

The child/young person's placement plan should include arrangements that need to be made for Foster Carers' annual leave and advance notice of this (ideally 28 days) should be communicated to the Supervising Social Worker.

Foster Carers are always encouraged to identify respite within their family network for such occasions where Foster Carers should require a short break or holiday. These agreements will not affect your Annual Leave entitlement and must be discussed with the Supervising Social Worker and child's Social Worker prior to the event and agreed by the Fostering Team Manager. If the Foster Carers request for the Fostering Service to identify respite for these occasions, the usual respite deductions will apply. It is essential that the number of changes in accommodation for the child/young person is kept to a minimum therefore careful consideration of Foster Carer's holiday is important.

8. Respite, Day Care and Sessional Payments

8a. Respite:

Allowances for respite placements and other occasional overnight stays away from the foster home:

Respite care for Looked After Children should be child focused. Where it is deemed necessary to support and maintain the stability of a specific placement details should be included in the child's Placement Plan.

Child going from one Milton Keynes approved Foster Carer to another:

Where respite arrangements are agreed, respite carers would be paid their full Professional Fee and also the basic maintenance allowance, pro-rata for the number of days a child is placed with them.

The Foster Carer who is having the respite will cease to receive the Maintenance allowance, but will continue to receive the Professional Fee.

Children/young people going for respite should be allowed to take some pocket money with them when going from their Foster Carer to a respite carer especially where the respite carer intends to take the child on a significant outing or activity. This arrangement is to be made between Foster Carers in advance of the planned respite.

Short periods away from the foster home:

Foster Carers will continue to receive full fostering allowances when children and young people have occasional overnight stays with friends or family members.

In some circumstances following agreement and discussion with the child's social worker it may be reasonable and/or appropriate for parents to be given money from the combined personal allowance to buy clothing items that the child requires. In these circumstances there should be agreement about what is a reasonable amount to be spent and the parent should provide a receipt to the carer when the child returns. Children should also be allowed to take with them some of the combined personal allowance for pocket money or activities.

8b. Sessional Payments:

Carers may be asked by the Fostering Service to undertake specific pieces of work will be paid a sessional rate of **£12.50 per hour**. Carers will be matched on the basis of their skills and abilities. Sessional payments do not include direct work with children and young people as this is outside of the terms of the carer's fostering registration.

- I. The sessional rate may be paid to carers who assist in any recruitment activities which do not involve staff e.g. training or attend interview panels.
- II. Carers who have the appropriate skills may be identified to offer additional support to other carers to help support placements at risk of breakdown. This will involve a discreet piece of work identified and formally agreed by professionals involved in the case.

Foster Carers providing sessional work should claim using form on a weekly basis. The form should be sent to the Fostering Duty Desk for Supervising Social Worker for authorisation.

9. Retainers

9a. Retainers:

A retainer may be considered in exceptional circumstance due to the complex needs of a particular child or for planned placements where introductions are required. It is possible to consider this option following full analysis of the specific reasons why no other children can be placed with the carer. This decision needs to be made prior to placement and agreed by the Head of Delivery (Corporate Parenting) in consultation with the Fostering Team Manager. These arrangements will only be put in place for a maximum of two weeks.

Child missing from placement (absconded) allowance and fees are payable for the first seven days and then are subject to the Head of Delivery's discretion.

Retainer payments can be made to Foster Carers who do preparatory or follow-up work at the end of a complex placement. Payments are made in line with the carer's respective Professional Fee. The payment is also made to carers holding a placement for children where care proceedings have been, or are about to be, initiated.

9b. Overpayments:

With carers being paid two weeks in arrears overpayments may occur if the arrangement of a placement is altered or ends in an unplanned way. Carers are required to notify the Fostering Duty team by using completing the appropriate form informing the team that a placement has ended. If an overpayment is made the overpayment will be recouped against the next payment to the carer.

Where the placement has ended the carer should contact their Supervising Social Worker to arrange repayment immediately. The remittance advice clearly states what the payment covers, including child/young person's case number(s) and placement dates. **It is an offence to spend money that you are not legally entitled to.**

9c. Complaints and Allegations:

If a child is moved or no placement made due to an allegation, complaint or concern having been raised all payable allowances will cease with immediate effect but at the discretion of the Council carers may continue to receive their Professional Fee for a **maximum of 16 weeks** regardless of whether the matter has been resolved or not. This is paid per child based on the number of children in placement at the time of the alleged incident.

The decision to pay carers during dispute will be made on a case-by-case basis by the Fostering Team Manager in conjunction with the Fostering Head of Delivery. Foster Carers will be informed of this authorisation by their Supervising Social Worker and/or Fostering Team Manager at the earliest opportunity; this will be followed-up with written notification from the Fostering Team manager.

The payment during investigation is a supportive measure to ensure that the Foster Carer is not financially disadvantaged during this period.

10. Management of Allowances

10a. Record of Expenditure:

Foster Carers are expected to complete a log of all income and expenditure related to holiday, birthday and festival allowances together with clothing and personal expenditure. This information should be recorded on the *Record of Expenditure Form* (see Appendix 2).

This will help the carer to:

- Demonstrate what the money has been used for and thereby reduce any risk of complaint
- If age appropriate, a young person should be encouraged to sign the expenditure sheet with the carer. This ensures that the young person is aware of financial management and the importance of financial and budgetary planning.
- Evidence expenditure to the Supervising Social Worker and the child's Social Worker who will monitor and "sign off" forms in supervision and statutory visits.

The completion of the form is required for audit purposes and to ensure that children and young people have received their full entitlement for each financial year and particularly when they move between placements.

A record of respite arrangements should be recorded by the carers to ensure that entitlements are received, and correct payments made.

10b. Receipts:

Foster Carers should retain receipts for their records as they may otherwise find themselves challenged by the Fostering Team or HMRC.

All receipts are to be retained and it is advised that each receipt is given a number, which is logged onto the *Record of Expenditure Form* next to the item and on the back of the receipt. This will make a receipt easier to find when it is requested by a social worker.

10c. Disability Living Allowance (DLA) / Personal Independence Payment (PIP):

Some children with complex needs may be eligible to be awarded Disability Living Allowance (0-16 years) or Personal Independence Payment (16+). These allowances are paid in respect of the additional needs the child or young person have to enable access to services. For example, this may include specialist clubs or activities or equipment such as sensory toys or additional bedding or clothing, if a child's needs mean that use and damage may occur frequently.

When applying for this benefit, a separate account should be set up for the money to be paid into. This ensures appropriate management and accountability of the benefit. The child's Social Worker should be in agreement and involved in the making of the application as they will be asked to provide additional information. Once the benefit is awarded, Foster Carers should inform their Supervising Social Worker and the child's Social Worker. Spending of the benefits must be in agreement of the child's Social Worker, Supervising Social Worker and Foster Carers should get written consent and record expenditure in the *DLA/PIP Record of Expenditure Form* (see Appendix 3) provided by the local authority.

The information about DLA expenditure must be available to the Independent Reviewing Officer for review at Child Care Review Meetings to ensure there is transparency and openness to spending of this money.

When a child is rehabilitated home or moves on all equipment purchased should go with the child. The Foster Carer in receipt of the allowance would notify the Department of Works and Pension that the child has moved on. Any money saved in the account would move with the child and arrangements for this should be agreed with the child's Social Worker.

11. Insurance and Tax

11a. Insurance:

Foster Carers are expected to have appropriate insurances for their property, including contents insurance for their own personal possessions and for the property of the child they are caring for. It is also recommended that you advise your home, contents and car insurance companies that you are fostering. If your home is damaged or you suffer loss as a result of fostering which is not covered by insurance, some compensation may be available through Milton Keynes Council. Please discuss this with your Supervising Social Worker.

Foster carer must notify supervising social worker of any changes to circumstances in relation to this within supervision.

11b. Tax:

On 6 April 2003, a generous tax-free threshold was introduced so most Foster Carers will find there is no tax to pay on the allowances they receive. Each fostering household is allowed a fixed amount of £10,000 plus £200.00 per week per child 0-10 years or £250.00 per week per child 11-18 years.

All Foster Carers have to register as self-employed and complete a tax return. To help with this, a Statement of Income is produced annually which states the Fostering Allowances and Professional Fees paid to Foster Carers during the past financial year.

If you have concerns about fostering and your tax situation, you can find out more on the Fostering Network website – www.fostering.net – or through the HMRC (Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs) www.hmrc.gov.uk/individals/foster-carers.htm.

Foster Carers are reminded that it is their responsibility to retain their remittance advice slips for tax purposes.

12. Appendix 1 – Competencies

TIER 0 FOSTER CARERS

Requirements

- ❖ Tier 0 Foster Carers have been temporarily approved by Milton Keynes Carers as Kinship Foster Carers who have been assessed as meeting the requirements of Regulation 24 of The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013.

Competencies

Caring for children

- ❖ Foster Carers are required to meet the developing needs of children placed in their care through the provision of a good standard of care.

Providing a safe and caring environment

- ❖ Foster Carers are assessed to provide safe care for the child placed.
- ❖ Foster Carers need to provide safe and secure accommodation to meet the needs of the child throughout the time they are living with them.
- ❖ Foster Carers are expected to highlight safeguarding concerns to both their Supervising Social Worker and the child's Social Worker immediately.
- ❖ Foster Carers should expect to receive at least one unannounced visit per year in order to safeguard children.

Working as part of a team

- ❖ Foster Carers will understand and know the individual needs of the child placed.
- ❖ Foster Carers will be required to work closely with the wider Children's Services department in meeting the child's identified needs; they must ensure the child is available when their Social Worker carries out statutory visits.
- ❖ Understanding the changing nature and focus of changing relationships.
- ❖ Foster Carers will work to minimise the trauma of loss and separation.
- ❖ Foster Carers will work to achieve a smooth transition for the child, which will require ongoing teamwork with their Supervising Social Worker and child's Social Worker.
- ❖ Foster Carers need to be available for monthly supervision with their Supervising Social Worker and to use this time to discuss any issues which affect them in caring for the child. Supervision provides the opportunity to discuss any concerns or difficulties they are experiencing in caring for the child and the changing nature of their new role as a Foster Carer.
- ❖ Foster Carers are required to support contact in a safe way with birth parents and extended family members where this is in the best interests of the child.
- ❖ Foster Carers are required to attend all meetings in relation to the child placed.
- ❖ Complete weekly Foster Carer logs.
- ❖ Engage with assessment in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011.
- ❖ **Foster carers will contribute proactively to Child Care Review, we suggest foster carers may wish to write the child a letter detailing what has been achieved over the last 6 months that can be kept by them.**

Own development

- ❖ Foster Carers are provided with information in relation to support services that meet their particular needs.
- ❖ A programme of training is available and specific training can be provided.

- ❖ Once approved, Tier 0 Foster Carers will be expected to successfully complete the Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards for connected persons during the first eighteen months after approval.

Training

- ❖ Complete any training as identified by their Supervising Social Worker (including but not limited to First Aid, Safeguarding and Safer Caring).

TIER 1 FOSTER CARERS

Foster Carers assessed who fully meet Tier 1 requirements and competencies are eligible for a Fostering Allowance and a Professional Fee, if recommended by Panel and approved by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM). Tier 1 Foster Carers may progress to Tier 2 when they fully meet the requirements and competencies for Tier 2 and is agreed by the Team Manager and or the Head of Delivery (Corporate Parenting Service).

Requirements

- ❖ To be fully compliant with the Fostering Regulations 2013.
- ❖ To be fully compliant with the NMS Fostering Services 2011.
- ❖ To be fully complaint with the HCC Accommodation Policy.
- ❖ To attend and successfully complete every component of the 'Skills to Foster' course.
- ❖ To complete a Personal Development Plan identifying their learning and development needs for their first year as Tier 1 carers - this will be reviewed annually.
- ❖ To consider all placements of children within their approval category, if available to foster (vacancy).
- ❖ To demonstrate evidence in their caring role of their skills to meet the needs of children who have experienced trauma and/or significant harm.
- ❖ To successfully complete the Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards workbook within 12 months of approval. If a Foster Carer is transferring from another agency and previously completed a TSD workbook, the competencies must be demonstrated during the assessment.

Competencies

Caring for children

- ❖ Ability to provide a good standard of care to children which promotes healthy emotional, physical, sexual and intellectual development.
- ❖ An ability to provide care appropriate to the individual needs of the child.
- ❖ An ability to work closely with the child's family and others who hold individual importance to the child.
- ❖ An ability to set appropriate boundaries and manage the child's behaviour within these without the use of physical or other inappropriate sanctions or behaviours.
- ❖ Knowledge of normal childhood development and an ability to listen to and communicate with the child appropriate to their emotional age and understanding.
- ❖ An ability to promote a young person's development towards adulthood.

Providing a safe and caring environment

- ❖ Develop a 'Family Safer Caring Policy' which will be reviewed annually or after any significant change in the household.
- ❖ An ability to ensure that the child is cared for in a home where they are safe from harm or abuse.
- ❖ An ability to help children keep themselves safe from harm or abuse and to know how to seek help if their safety is threatened.
- ❖ An ability to recognise the particular vulnerability to abuse and to discrimination of disabled children.
- ❖ All children placed must be provided with their own room and personal space. This must be in line with Milton Keynes Council's Policy.
- ❖ Expect to receive at least two unannounced visits per annum in order to safeguard children.
- ❖ Complete weekly Foster Carer logs.

Working as part of a team

- ❖ An ability to collaborate with other professional workers and to contribute to the department's planning for the child/young person.

- ❖ An ability to communicate effectively and, if required, produce written records for court and as a contribution to the child/young person's case records to identify any changes in behaviour and any reasons for this.
- ❖ A requirement to keep information confidential.
- ❖ A requirement to promote equality, diversity and the rights of individuals within society.

Own development

- ❖ An ability to appreciate how personal experiences have affected themselves and their families, and the impact that fostering is likely to have on them all.
- ❖ An ability to use people and links within the community to provide support.
- ❖ An ability to use training opportunities and improve skills.
- ❖ An ability to sustain positive relationships and maintain effective functioning through periods of stress.

Training

Foster Carers should maintain an ongoing training and development portfolio that demonstrates how they are meeting the skills required of them. During the first year they must complete the following training courses:

- ❖ Principles and Values in Foster Carer (*including Equality and Diversity*)
- ❖ Safer Care and Safeguarding the Welfare of Children (*renewed every 3 years*)
- ❖ Recording Practice for Carers
- ❖ Emergency First Aid (*renewed every 3 years*)
- ❖ Good Health for Children in Care
- ❖ Promoting Education Achievement for Children and Young People
- ❖ What Happens When Carers Have Allegations Made Against Them or Members of Their Family
- ❖ Attachment
- ❖ And any other training identified by their Supervising Social Worker
- ❖ There is an expectation that Foster Carers will attend a minimum of 16 hours training each year.

TIER 2 FOSTER CARERS

Foster Carers assessed as meeting all the requirements and competencies of Tiers 1 and 2 are eligible for a Fostering Allowance and Professional Fee at Tier 2 (subject to recommendation and approval by the Team Manager and Head of Delivery (Corporate Parenting Service)).

In order to remain at Tier 2, Foster Carers need to continually evidence that they fully meet the requirements and competencies of this Tier.

Requirements

- ❖ Must have been fostering for at least two years at Tier One.
- ❖ Must have completed the TSD Standards Workbook and all requirements at Tier One.
- ❖ Must have completed 'Fostering Changes' training or equivalent (to be determined).
- ❖ Must have completed other relevant training as identified within their Personal Development Plan, drawn up with their Supervising Social Worker.

Competencies

Caring for children

- ❖ An ability to encourage children to develop appropriate social behaviour, helping them to become more independent and enabling them to cope with their emotions as appropriate to their age.
- ❖ An ability to help children develop basic aspects of memory, thinking, imagination and manipulative skills through play and conversation etc.
- ❖ An ability to help children develop their language skills and general self-expression.
- ❖ An ability to help children learn the boundaries of acceptable behaviour without resorting to physical punishment, handle negative reactions, naughtiness, unacceptable behaviour and encourage positive behaviour patterns.
- ❖ An ability to plan for and provide a varied and appropriate routine which balances the child's needs, including those of play and learning and sets goals which can be achieved in measuring the child's development.
- ❖ An ability to help children and families cope with loss and bereavement resulting from life threatening illness or separation through adoption or loss of their idealised family.

Providing a safe and caring environment

- ❖ An ability to observe and respond appropriately to the possibility of child abuse and neglect.
- ❖ An ability to observe and assess children clearly recording development and anything else significant to the child.
- ❖ An ability to appropriately challenge fostering practices to ensure that it is anti-discriminatory in its approach and respects all children and their families.

Working as part of a team

- ❖ 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.
- ❖ An ability to promote the educational development of children looked after, including evidence of contributing to PEP meetings, attending school/college consultation meetings, supporting home learning and accessing training/activities provided by the Virtual School.
- ❖ An ability to promote the health needs of children looked after evidenced in a healthy lifestyle, attendance of health appointments and recording information in the Red Health Book or My Care Journey (Health Passport).
- ❖ Complete weekly Foster Carer logs.

Own development

- ❖ An ability to identify and access support and training opportunities.
- ❖ To use this leaning to improve carers' own practice.
- ❖ Successful completion of Training Support Development (TSD).
- ❖ Attendance of at least three post-approval courses, as well as all the training identified for Tier 1 Foster Carers.
- ❖ Foster Carers are expected to contribute to the Service by being part of development groups e.g. training or recruitment strategy. They are also expected to mentor or "buddy" new or inexperienced Foster Carers or contribute to the 'Skills to Foster' course.

Training

Tier 2 Foster Carers are expected to have completed and following the training requirements stated in the competencies for Tier 1 Foster Carers. Tier 2 Foster Carers are also expected to have completed the following training courses:


- ❖ Child Sexual Exploitation Awareness (CSE)
- ❖ Signs of Safety – Induction Briefing for Foster Carers
- ❖ Radicalisation
- ❖ Attachment
- ❖ Managing Violence and Aggression

It is expected that the main carer completes all five courses in Year 2 and the secondary carer will have completed all courses by the end of Year 3.


Foster carers will attend any other training identified by Supervising Social Worker.

There is an expectation that foster carers attend any other additional training that has been identified within personal development plan.

13. Appendix 2 – Record of Expenditure Form

Milton Keynes Council Foster Carers Record of Expenditure Form				
				
Name of Foster Carer:				
Name of Fostering Social Worker:				
Name of Child:				
Name of Child Care Social Worker:				
Placement Start Date:				
Placement End Date (if applicable):				
Date:	Item:	Receipt Number:	Reason for Item:	Cost:
			Total Amount Purchased:	£0.00
Signed by Foster Carer:		Date:		
Signed by Supervising Social Worker:		Date:		
*The Child's Social Worker can also request to see a copy of this form.				

16. Appendix 5 – Exception Expenses Form

Milton Keynes Council Foster Carers Exceptional Expenses Form			
Name of Foster Carer:			
Name of Fostering Social Worker:			
Name of Child:			
Name of Child Care Social Worker:			
Date:	Item:	Reason for Item:	Cost:
		Total Amount to be Paid:	£0.00

17. Appendix 6 – Fortnightly Payment Schedule

2022/23 Fortnightly Payment Schedule				
Run Number	Period From	Period To	Date Payment Arrives	
P1	04/03/2022	4/16/2022	4/22/2022	Quarter 1
P2	4/17/2022	4/30/2022	05/06/2022	
P3	05/01/2022	5/14/2022	5/20/2022	
P4	5/15/2022	5/28/2022	06/03/2022	
P5	5/29/2022	06/11/2022	6/17/2022	
P6	06/12/2022	6/25/2022	07/01/2022	Quarter 2
P7	6/26/2022	07/09/2022	7/15/2022	
P8	07/10/2022	7/23/2022	7/29/2022	
P9	7/24/2022	08/06/2022	08/12/2022	
P10	08/07/2022	8/20/2022	8/26/2022	
P11	8/21/2022	09/03/2022	09/09/2022	
P12	09/04/2022	9/17/2022	9/23/2022	Quarter 3
P13	9/18/2022	10/01/2022	10/07/2022	
P14	10/02/2022	10/15/2022	10/21/2022	
P15	10/16/2022	10/29/2022	11/04/2022	
P16	10/30/2022	11/12/2022	11/18/2022	
P17	11/13/2022	11/26/2022	12/02/2022	
P18	11/27/2022	12/10/2022	12/16/2022	
P19*	12/11/2022	12/24/2022	12/30/2022	Quarter 4
P20	12/25/2022	01/07/2023	1/13/2023	
P21	01/08/2023	1/21/2023	1/27/2023	
P22	1/22/2023	02/04/2023	02/10/2023	
P23	02/05/2023	2/18/2023	2/24/2023	
P24	2/19/2023	03/04/2023	03/10/2023	
P25	03/05/2023	3/18/2023	3/24/2023	
P26*	3/19/2023	04/01/2023	04/05/2023	Quarter 1