

APPENDIX 1

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT - PAYMENTS AND ALLOWANCES TO CONNECTED AND NON CONNECTED FOSTER CARERS

1. Introduction

This consultation document sets out Southwark Council's proposals for Payments and Allowances for Foster Carers and Family and Friends/ Connected Carers (hereafter referred to as Connected Persons Carers) from 1 April 2014 and payments and allowances to other carers entitled to financial support as specified.

The intention is to have a fair payment scheme which clearly sets out the both the entitlement and responsibilities of carers. The scheme is linked to the National Fostering Network Allowance for London which is reviewed annually. This scheme will be subject to annual review.

The scheme is structured to encourage the continued professional development of foster carers.

2. Outline of Proposed Structure

The scheme is made up of 3 core elements:-

- 1) **The Fostering Allowance**
- 2) **The Fostering Fee**
- 3) **Specific Payments**

The Fostering Allowance is based on the costs of caring for a child which is calculated on an annual basis by The Fostering Network. The Fostering Fee is a professional fee paid to foster carers linked to the fostering training that they have undertaken.

There are also a range of other more specific payments which are described in detail at the end of the document.

- 4) Birthday and Festivity Payment
- 5) Holiday Payment
- 6) Discretionary School Uniform Payment
- 7) Discretionary Setting Up (child clothes and equipment) Payment
- 8) Discretionary Setting Up (foster carers home/ equipment) Payment
- 9) Technology Payment

3. Consultation Process

Southwark Foster Care Association received a version of the consultation document prior to their meeting on the 11 December 2013.

This is the amended document for foster carers to consider.

A drop in session has been arranged for the 14 January with carers and there is also an email address to answer any questions.

Responses to the consultation must be received by 12 noon on the 10 February

It is proposed that the new scheme will be effective from the first of April 2013

4. Equality Assessment

The scheme is designed to be transparent and fair. It has been calculated that only 12 carers will be entitled to slightly less under these arrangements. It has been agreed that these carers will continue to be paid at the rate they were receiving under the old scheme until the new scheme is financially beneficial for them. Thus there will be no losers under these arrangements.

5. Key Principles

5.1 All carers approved under Regulation 27 of The Fostering Services (England) 2011 regulations and Connected Persons temporarily approved under regulation 24 of The Fostering Services (England) 2010 Regulations will receive a weekly allowance linked to the National Fostering Network London Rate

5.2 The Fostering Fee payments are linked to the successful completion of each tier of professional development training

5.3 At the point of drafting the document Foster Carers can choose to apply for an exemption of £10,000 per household (pro rata) and £200 per week for each child under 11 years of age and £250 per week for children over 11 years old. Or Foster carers can claim expenses incurred against income received from the council.

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/individuals/foster-carers.htm>

5.5 However tax law is subject to change and foster carers are advised to contact their local tax office or a professional body such as the Fostering Network to confirm their tax positions

5.6 The Southwark Foster Care Association will be consulted on any proposed changes to the scheme prior to the full consultation with foster carers

5.7 The payment scheme is subject to annual review

6. The Payment Scheme

6.1 The Foster care payment scheme consists of 3 elements:-

- i) The Fostering allowance linked to the child
- ii) The Fostering Fee linked to training
- iii) Specific payments e.g. Birthday and technology payments

7. The Fostering Allowance

7.1 Every foster carer whether approved under regulation 24 or 27 of the Fostering Service Regulations is entitled to The Fostering Allowance.

7.2 This is weekly allowance based on the age of the child. The amount of the allowance is set at the National Fostering Network Minimum London Rate for the relevant year.

7.3 The National Fostering Network calculate the cost of caring for a looked after child, annually and publish their figures.

7.4 The National Fostering Network Minimum London Rates for 2014/15 are:-

0-4 years of age	£164.71 per week
5-10	£187.77
11-15	£ 233.83
16 - 18	£283.95

7.5 The Fostering Allowance is to cover all the costs associated with the care of the child or young person and their day to day needs. It includes direct costs such as food, clothing and social activities and indirect costs such as family transport / outings

7.6 An indicative breakdown of how a carer might be expected to spend this allowance is included below:-

- Food including school meals 25%
- Leisure & activities 20 %
- Clothing 15%
- Household 15%
- Health and hygiene 5%
- Transport 5%
- Pocket money 5%
- Savings 5%
- Babysitting/ child minding 5%
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8. The Fostering Fee

8.1 The Fees are set at 4 levels and are dependent on the foster carers meeting the criteria as specified

9. Level 1 Foster Carers

9.1 All Foster carers are entitled to The Fostering Allowance at the appropriate age rate, and where assessed as appropriate Specific Payments to meet the child's needs.

9.2 Placements made with Connected Foster Carer are made under Regulation 24 of the 2010 Fostering regulations. These are usually made in an urgent situation.

Connected Carers can be approved for 16 weeks with a possible extension of no more than 8 weeks to complete' The Suitability to Foster Assessment which is put before Southwark's Fostering Panel as per the Fostering Regulations.

9.3 The Connected Carers are expected to make themselves available to complete the fostering assessment and submit required documentation. During this time they will be

assessed on their ability to work with the Local Authority to care for the child in accordance with the Childs Placement Plan.

9.4 Once a carer has been considered by Southwark Fostering Panel and approved by the Fostering Decision Maker the Connected Carers are registered as Regulation 27 Carers which is the same regulation under which non related Carers are registered.

9.5 In order to be registered, carers will have demonstrated that they are able to meet the National Minimum Standards for Fostering. This includes:-

- Cooperating with the requirements of the fostering role , including attending reviews, record keeping, supporting contact , maintaining savings and photographic and other records for the child
 - Working to support the child's successful progression to adult hood together with the supervising and child's social worker, schools and other professionals
 - Transporting the child to and from school and contact where required until they are of a sufficient age to travel independently
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9.6 The detailed core requirements of Foster Carers are specified in Appendix 1

9.7 Finance arrangements: Level 1 Foster Carers will receive The Fostering Allowance plus Specific Payments where this is assessed as appropriate

10. Level 2 Foster Carers

10.1 Level 2 Foster Carers will be registered Regulation 27 Foster Carers and meet the requirements of Level 1 Foster Carers.

10.2 In addition Level 2 Foster Carers will have completed the Skills to Foster Training and will have undertaken to complete the Southwark Post Approval Fostering Training within 3 months of their registration.

10.3 All Foster Carers are encouraged to become Level 2 Carers.

10.4 Connected Foster Carers may wish to take an alternative route to becoming a Level 2 Carer by completing the Training Support and Development Standards for Family and Friends Carers (a simplified version of the Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers).

10.5 Financial Arrangements: Level 2 Foster Carers will receive weekly the Fostering Allowance and the Level 2 Fostering Fee plus Specific Payments where this is assessed as appropriate

11. Level 3 Foster Carers

11.1 Level 3 Foster Carers will already meet the requirements of both Level 1 and Level 2 Foster Carers.

11.2 In addition Level 3 Foster Carers will have completed The Department for Education Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers 2012. These provide the national minimum bench mark which sets out what carers should know, understand and be expected to do, within the first 12 to 18 months of being approved.

11.3 It is expected that Southwark Foster Carers complete this training within 2 years of registration.

11.4 In following years, in order to maintain payments at Fostering Level 3 all carers will be expected to have undertaken a minimum of 2 pieces of further training and demonstrate how they have used this in their practice as foster carers at their annual reviews.

11.5 Finance arrangements Level 3 carers will receive weekly the Fostering Allowance and the Level 3 Fostering Fee plus Specific Payments where this is assessed as appropriate.

12. Level 4 Specialist Carers

12.1 Level 4 Specialist Carers will cover a range of schemes each with its own specific requirements.

12.2 In the future other specialist schemes may be set up each with its own particular requirements

13 .1 Specialist Carers for Disabled Children and Young People

13.2 In addition to meeting the Core Responsibilities of Foster Carers see Appendix 1, Specialist Foster carers for Disabled children and young people must also meet the following requirements;-

13.3 Foster Carers have accessible, suitably equipped and safely maintained transport.

13.4 Foster Carers must be able to offer an environment which is adapted and equipped to maximise the Child's independence or be willing to have such adaptations made to their house if placements are long term. They must be willing to follow specialist advice about use of suitable equipment e.g. hoists for transfers.

13.5 Where the disabled Child or Young Person is going to be placed with Foster Carers on a long term basis and house adaptations are needed/will be needed as the child grows, Local Authority will support the Foster Carer with their application for a Disabled Facilities Grant.

13.6 Foster Carers must be willing to allow specialist professionals into their house when necessary (e.g. if waking nursing night cover or 24 hour nursing care is needed).

13.7 Foster Carers should support transition plans for the Young Person into adult service provision where appropriate.

13.8 Where a Child or Young Person is in receipt of state benefits as a result of their disability, the foster carer and link worker will actively monitor the use of this money

so that it is used directly for the benefit of the Child or Young Person and does not replace core care funding for the Child or Young Person.

13.9 Financial arrangements for Specialist Foster carers (disability) Foster carers caring for children who are registered disabled will receive The Fostering Allowance x 2 plus The Fostering Level 4 Fee plus Specific Payments where this is assessed as appropriate

14. Additional Allowances

14.1 Birthday and Festivities payments

20014/15 rate

Age 0-10 year's £100 payable to carers

Age 11 to 18 years £150 payable to carers

Carers should record what they spend and keep the receipts

14.2 Annual Holiday allowance of subject to foster carers showing appropriate receipts.

20014/15 rate

0-10 years £250

11-18 years £400

14.3 No more than every 3 years foster carers may request a discretionary additional payment for special holidays

14.3 Discretionary setting up costs carers (e.g. bedroom furnishings) up to max **£500**

14.4 Discretionary setting up costs child to maximum of **£200** for child's clothes and equipment

14.5 Uniform Allowances discretionary usually paid where child changes school at onset of placement up to a maximum of **£100**

14.6 Technology Allowances– This is restricted to Regulation 27 approved carers where it is planned that they will care for a child or a succession of children for at least 1 year. They will be provided with computer, printer and digital camera post registration up to a value of **£600**. An annual allowance of **£150** is made to cover broad band connection and printing costs. Carers can have equipment updated no more than tri annual basis up to a value of **£400** on production of receipts.

**** Figures in bold italic are the 2014/15 at the rate***