



Bromley Payments Policy and Guidance

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Our FC agreement still used today says –

“Bromley will ensure

- you continue to receive pay for up to 8 weeks should an investigation necessitate a child/young person being removed temporarily and/or your fostering status put on hold pending the outcome. Any subsequent payment will be subject to review”

This document must be read in conjunction with the Payments to Bromley Foster Carers document

1) Types of Fostering

There are several different types of fostering within the Bromley Fostering Service. These include:

Respite foster carers give other parents and foster carers a break from caring for their child for up to 7 days.

Short-term foster carers look after children taken into care at short notice until their family situation has been resolved for up to a maximum of 2 years.

Permanent / Long-Term Matched foster carers look after children who require care for an extended period of time, usually up until aged 18.

Parent and Child foster carers have a parent and their child(ren) in placement whilst an assessment is undertaken by the child’s social worker.

Short Breaks are when foster carers look after disabled children for less than 75 days in the year to support the family to continue to care for them.

Family and Friends/Connected Person’s carers are foster carers who are family members or people who had a previous relationship with the child in care before looking after them.

New Horizons specialist fosters carers

Encompass specialist fosters carers

2) Allowances and Fees

This document needs to be read in conjunction with the published payment rates for foster carers. Foster carers will be consulted prior to any major changes to the payment scheme.

3) Weekly Allowances for Foster Carers

All foster carers receive an allowance, including carers approved for family and friend placements (this includes Connected Person carers under Regulation 24 and 25)

The allowance is provided to cover the costs of looking after a child in the placement. For example, it covers the costs of accommodating the child in the home, food and associated household bills, entertainment and activity costs, clothing costs and items that help children and young people improve their outcomes. These allowances are published each year and are reviewed in line with the DfE recommendations.

Regulation 24 Connected Person carers will be paid the Fostering/CP allowance for the age of the child which is equivalent to that provided to all foster carers. If the Connected Persons carers are approved at Fostering Panel, then they will be paid the reward element of the fostering allowance in addition to the Fostering/CP allowance.

Payment breakdown:

- Fostering/CP allowance fee for the child is age related less savings.
- Professional fee for 0-12 years £206.66 which is age related
- For children 13+ the Professional fee is £258.27.
- Additional Holiday allowance will be paid

4) Respite Payments for Children Looked After (CLA) / Children With Disabilities (CWD)

Respite payments will be in line with the weekly allowances for mainstream foster carers. The weekly allowance is broken down into a daily rate which will be paid to foster carers for the duration of the respite period. Those carers who care for children with disability on a short breaks basis will be paid an enhanced rate to acknowledge the additional skills, tasks and expenses related to meeting their needs. Any respite must be for the benefit of the child to support their placement with the foster carer. Any respite plan must therefore be agreed by the child's social worker on this basis before it is implemented. If a plan of respite is agreed, then no payments will be deducted from the main carer for up to seven days. This will be based on an individual circumstances.

5) Relief Carers

From time to time, it may be appropriate for a child to be looked after temporarily by a member of the carers' extended family or friend especially if the child is placed with the foster carer on a permanent, long-term basis. These carers should be identified by the main carers during their main assessment or during supervision and assessed by their fostering social worker. This will be subject to the usual checks and agreement of the children's social work team and the Fostering Service. This can only be arranged where the foster child already knows the relative or friend and they have been approved as a relief carer to care for that child by the Head of Service. Such an arrangement may be the best way to provide continuity of care for them. In these circumstances the family member can only care for the child(ren) overnight in the main carers' home.

In this case the reward and Fostering/CP Allowance payment will be paid to the relief carer. The amount paid will be equal to the age-related Fostering/CP allowance and the reward for mainstream carers for the days the main carers are away. During these times the payment to the main carer will be stopped unless the respite is for the child in agreement with their care plan. If a plan of respite is agreed, then no payments will be deducted from the main carer for up to seven days. This will be based on an individual circumstances.

Respite for up to 7 days where both Carers and Respite carers can be paid. This can only be requested up to twice per year.

If rolling respite has been agreed by Group Manager or HoS Permanency to sustain Placement stability, funds will not be deducted from the main carer

6) Emergency Payments

At times children may be placed with foster carers without any clothing or belongings. When this happens an emergency payment can be made for each child to the foster carer to buy essentials during the first few days of the placement and until the carer receives their first payment. This will be up to £60, to be used for essential clothing. This will be agreed by the Head of Service or Group manager in their absence. Any further clothing or essentials following this will come from the Fostering/CP allowance payments as usual.

Respite for up to 7 days where both Carers and Respite carers can be paid. This can only be requested up to twice per year.

If rolling respite has been agreed by Group Manager or HoS Permanency to sustain Placement stability, funds will not be deducted from the main carer

7) Retainers

Foster carers will not be paid when there are no children in placement. This includes when children either return home to parents or move on to an alternative placement arrangement and there is a period where no other children are placed with the carer. The exception to this will be when a placement is needed for a child who is currently in Court proceedings and the carers have been identified and named in Court as those with whom the child will be placed. In these circumstances the retainer payment will be paid on a pro-rata basis for a maximum period of four weeks. Also, when a carer has been identified as a long-term permanent placement or moved on to a permanent placement from fostering carer gets £100.00 per week for 2 weeks. This will be reviewed after the two weeks if this continues to be needed.

8) Shared Care

Children and young people may sometimes require a placement to be shared between their parents and a foster carer. In these circumstances whilst the child is living with their parents, the carers will receive the retainer payment paid on a pro-rata basis. During the period when the child or young person is with the carers the normal fostering allowances will apply. These payments will also take affect when a child or young person attends a residential school placement but requires a foster placement during the weekends and school holidays.

9) Outreach Payments

Carers will often be asked to complete work with children to support their placement with their current foster carers. This work will be paid at the hourly rate which will be reviewed each year in line with the other allowances and fees – currently £11.44. This will include the time for transporting children as well as taking children out during the day.

If outreach is for more than 1 child at a time to 1 location, Mileage is only claimed once, and outreach hourly rate is paid per child.

10) Carers Additional Holiday Allowance

Foster carers will receive additional holiday allowance up to 10 nights per annum (April 1st to March 31st) where the foster child joins them (this is per foster family), this is based on Professional fee rate. Payment will only be paid on receipt of evidence of the holiday being booked for the child(ren).

Foster carers who would like to take their holiday allowance should contact their supervising social worker to decide.

Payment is not made if child does not go on holiday with Carers. During the time the child(ren) is placed with a respite foster carer, the respite foster carer will receive the full allowance in accordance with the child's age. The main foster carer will not receive any payments during this time.

Carers will also be paid an additional 2 weeks Fostering/CP allowance per child during the summer to contribute towards the costs associated with a holiday or summer activities. The holiday plans should be recorded in the foster carer's supervision record. Foster carers should contact their supervising social worker to request holiday allowance.

Respite carers will not receive holiday payment.

11) Short Break and Full Time Payments for Disabled Children Including DLA –

There are no conditions laid down by the DWP as to how DLA should be spent. It is intended that the money be used to enhance the child's life so that the child gets maximum support from the payment of this benefit. Therefore, Foster Carers acting as an appointee for a fostered child receiving DLA have primary responsibility to use the benefit appropriately to support the practical and emotional needs of the child and to save any surplus for the child to use in the future.

DLA should be spent by the foster carer in securing services and or support to meet the child's additional needs. Foster carers are accountable for their use of the DLA to the DWP and not the Local Authority. However, the child's bank statement details should be kept by the foster carer, along with records and details of expenditure. These records should be discussed with the supervising social worker during their supervision visit and recorded within their supervision notes. Any expenditure of the DLA should also be entered onto the child's file on a three-monthly basis by the child's social worker.

Whilst it is not the responsibility of the Local Authority to monitor the use of DLA by a foster carer, if the Local Authority suspects that DLA is being claimed or used inappropriately and/or fraudulently, the Local Authority will refer the matter to the DWP to investigate as misuse of the benefit is a criminal offence. Misuse of DLA may also, dependent upon the circumstances, result in a consideration of a carers' approval by Fostering Services.

DLA is intended to support everyday living. It can be spent on a range of activities and equipment to meet the children's additional needs. The DLA may be used, but is not limited to, the following:

- Identified activities that meet the specific needs of a child that are costly e.g. horse riding, after school clubs etc.
- Provision of an escort to enable social events to be attended.
- Extra helper for an outing or holiday.
- Additional transport costs for trips out.
- Special holiday for the child, which could include extra support such as a child sitting service
- Specialised and adapted equipment such as a computer or communication aids.
- Laundry costs and appliances.
- Replacement clothing where there is excessive wear and tear on clothing.

- Additional heating costs in relation to the child.
- Additional help with personal care.
- Special toys to meet child's needs – which may be of therapeutic value.
- Domestic help to allow carer to spend more time with the child.

Any agreement to spend the DLA should be formally recorded on the child's file and reviewed at regular intervals. DLA is not intended to be savings or an investment plan for the child. DLA should be spent in the manner for which it is intended. See karen email

Carers who care for disabled children who meet the criteria for the Disabled Children's Team will be paid an enhanced fee to reflect the specialist, additional skills and payments needed to care for children and young people with severe learning or physical disabilities. Please see payments table for details of these.

12) Specialist Schemes:

New Horizons

Bromley have a specialist scheme for children who are coming back into foster care from a residential unit or those children who are remanded into the Local Authority's care. Carers who are interested in going onto this scheme will need to be assessed and will need to attend specific training to support them in caring for this very vulnerable group of children. To reflect the level of care that these carers will be offering, the weekly payments will be enhanced. This will be made up of the Fostering/CP allowance fee for the young person at the upper age level despite the age of the child, plus the enhanced rate. The remainder will be the professional fee for the carer.

Payment breakdown:

- Fostering/CP allowance fee for the young person at the upper age level despite the age of the child = £299.00.
- Professional fee of £258.27+206.66 plus enhanced rate of £50.00 = £514.93 Total £813.93.

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Parity for Connected Persons (Kinship) Foster Carers – Young People Aged 13+

The London Borough of Bromley is committed to ensuring parity of treatment between mainstream and Connected Persons (kinship) foster carers. Where an enhanced professional fee is available for mainstream foster carers in respect of children aged 13 and over, an equivalent **enhanced professional fee route** will be available to **Connected Persons foster carers**, subject to the same **objective, published criteria** and approval processes. This provision ensures compliance with applicable case law and statutory guidance and prevents disadvantage by reason only of a carer's familial relationship to the child.

Additional Holiday allowance will be paid

Parent & Child

Foster carers have a parent and their child(ren) in placement whilst an assessment is undertaken by the child's social worker – Weekly allowance of £803.94.

Payment breakdown:

- Fostering/CP allowance fee for the young person at the upper age level despite the age of the child = £299.00.
- Professional fee of £258.27+206.66 plus enhanced rate of £50.00 = £514.93: Total £813.93

Additional Holiday allowance will be paid

Encompass Breakdown

£500 a week – when a child has been matched with an Encompass family and introductions start

£1000 a week - when child has moved into an Encompass family home. (This includes the child's money)

13) Guidance on Items Covered in the Allowance**CLA child related payments****Family Time**

Payment will be paid per child for an activity. The payment will be £15.00. Parents cost will be paid for up to £15.00 if the parent is not working.

If the Parent is working, then the cost of the activity for them will not be paid.

Mileage to the activity will be paid at the rate of 25 pence per mile.

Hair care- for some black children hair care can be more costly. Foster carers should pay the first £30 for hair care out the child's allowance and claim the rest but not more often than 5-6 weeks

Clothing

The clothing element of the allowance can be used flexibly by the foster carer to buy clothes directly for younger children or be given to older children/young people on a weekly/monthly basis to purchase their own clothing. Older young people should be encouraged to take responsibility for some of this allowance as part of their developing independence skills and learning to budget. Details of this must be discussed within the Placement Planning Meeting.

Standard School Materials

School materials that are required for a young person's school attendance and activities are provided for within the allowance. If specific major items are required, foster carers should contact their social worker regarding payments for 'one off' educational items that are in the child's best interests and part of their care plan.

Mobile Phones

If a child/young person has a mobile phone, then this is to be discussed at the Placement Planning Meeting as to the level of contribution the foster carer should make.

It is advised that Carers do not get contract mobiles phones once YP turns 16.

Toiletries

In general, it is expected that children would use toiletries provided by carers for general use. It is envisaged, as children get older, carers should provide them with toiletries of their choice, within reason.

To encourage young people to budget as they get older, an allowance should be given to them to purchase their own toiletries. This is to be recorded within the first or a review of the child's Placement Plan.

Nursery Fees

Nursery provision is available free up to 15 hours per week for 2-year-olds who are looked after children. This option is to be maximised for all 2-year-olds in placement in discussion with child's Social Worker and include in their Care / Placement Plan.
No child should be put in Nursery unless agreed by CSW.

Luggage

The allowance provides for the purchase of luggage for children and young people. All young people moving to independence or between placements must have appropriate personal luggage. It is **not** acceptable for any item of the young person's belongings to be moved in bin liners.

Travel costs

Wherever possible, it is expected that carers should transport children in their care to education, contact (where it's safe to do so), health appointments and leisure activities.

Where appropriate and depending on an assessment of need that takes account of age and maturity, young people should be encouraged to use local public transport and should be provided with reasonable funds to enable them to do this. This should be discussed in the Placement Planning Meeting.

Please also see section on Mileage/Public Transport Allowances

School Uniform

Fostering/CP payments cover the ongoing costs of school uniforms. However, due to the often-high initial costs of paying for this an additional allowance may be claimed up to a maximum of £150.00 for infant/junior school for initial set up. for senior school / 6th Form, up to £350.00 any young person when beginning a new school or a new year where a change in uniform is required. This may be claimed for as an 'exceptional' expenditure, (uniforms with logo) and receipts must be provided.

Any additional clubs need to be discussed with the CSW and SSW that is above the activities budget conversation to take place

Ask Virtual School if any Pupil Premium can be use

Holidays

Part payment of holidays will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and to be discussed with SSW and CSW and there are no set agreed payments for annul holiday

Contact

When a child has contact with their parents it is not expected that carers should fund any activities that they do. Carers are, however, expected to provide a snack and drink for the child only and only if required. If the contact is just between siblings, it is expected that carers fund their child's activity so that contact can be more informal.

Key documents

The child's Social Work Team will fund a passport and birth certificate for all children and young people. This will provide two forms of identification and a travel document.

The passport and birth certificate can assist young people with opening bank/savings accounts when young people are moving towards independence.

Child Social Workers to provide letter to FC to prove child is in FCs care.

CLA Savings

CLA savings is being taken at source and administered by the London Borough Bromley started from 1st September 2022.

However, if Carers already have a savings account in place please contact your supervising social worker SW as Carers can transfer these savings over to savings account in Bromley.

14) Guidance on Grants Additional and Discretionary Payments

When LBB newly approves a foster carer, it is acknowledged that a certain amount of equipment is required for them to undertake the fostering tasks. Foster carers on approval will be expected to make the necessary purchases to care for the children within their approval range. However, for certain equipment the Council will reimburse foster carers. The Fostering Service will be responsible for funding for all new cot mattresses as required, in line with recommendations that a new mattress should be provided for each new baby up to a year old.

Specialist equipment which is necessary to the care of a particular child or young person especially those children who are disabled will be paid for if this is agreed as being necessary by the child's SW. Support for any additional equipment may also be given if this is required when caring for a sibling group or when providing parent and child placements. This must be authorised by the Group Manager or Head of Service within the Permanency Service before anything can be purchased and any receipts must be provided.

When a carer's age preference is changed, either to extend the age range or to increase the number of children they can care for, then they should discuss with their social worker what (if any) extra equipment is needed. The details and reason for each item and the cost should be presented to the Group Manager or Head of Service for a decision on their approval.

It is anticipated that should any equipment purchased by the initial one-off payment require replacement through normal wear and tear, then these items will be replaced by the foster carer via the ongoing fostering allowance.

Birthday, festive and holiday allowances

Foster carers will be paid 1-week additional allowances at Christmas and for each child's birthday.

Respite carers will not receive the birthday or Christmas payment.

15) Additional Guidance Regarding Holiday Allowances

School Trips

Children in Care should also be able to participate in school holidays and trips. These can include short breaks, days out or spending a block of time away from their foster carers. Money is already allocated within the weekly allowances for summer holidays, activities and trips and there is an expectation that carers will make provision for this with the children they care for.

All school holidays abroad will not normally be funded outside this arrangement however in exceptional circumstances, if there is a special trip of significant expense then the agreement to pay for the holiday can go to the relevant departmental Head of Service for their approval if the holiday is in the child's best interest. In these situations, no commitment or booking of the holiday should take place until this approval has been obtained.

Exceptional Expenditure

The allowance foster carers receive for the child includes the additional costs foster carers incur over and above looking after children in the home. Carers are expected to pay for activities during the week however these need to be agreed at the Placement Planning Meeting. If there are specific necessities which a child(ren) requires to meet their needs, then funding for this will need to be agreed by the department. As the additional costs of fostering are already being met, it is only in exceptional cases that additional allowances will be paid.

Examples include:

(a) Where the special needs of the child cannot be met by the allowance, e.g. special diet, special activities, extra hygiene, extra laundry, etc. In these circumstances an additional enhanced payment will be paid per week to meet these costs. However, if the child is receiving the Disability Living Allowance, then this should be considered and used in the first instance. This must be with the agreement of the child's social worker and supervising social worker. Carer's looking after children supported by Bromley's Disabled Children's Service will already receive an enhanced payment and will therefore not be entitled to this additional payment.

(b) It is important in promoting the development and self-esteem of a vulnerable child that an expensive item be purchased now rather than be saved up for.

(c) If equipment for an activity is very expensive, e.g. sports equipment or a musical instrument, consideration will be given to paying for this, if the young person has shown a commitment to the activity over several weeks.

(d) Glasses/contact lenses – we will refund the cost of a child's glasses/contact lenses up to £200 per year. Anything over this needs to be agreed by HoS.

Dental Expenses:

Carers to discuss with SSW any expenses over and above NHS costs. If the Dentist recommends Hygienist appointment, we will refund the cost up to £100 a year.

All exceptional expenditure must be authorised in advance by the Fostering team before any purchases are made.

Retainers during Investigations

There may be occasions when a child or children may be removed from a foster carer due to concerns regarding the care of that child, which then requires a formal investigation. In these circumstances, the foster carer will not be able to have another child placed with them.

In such situations the carer will receive the equivalent age-related professional fee of the fostering allowance for a period of 28 days at the head of service discretion. However, the Head of Service can withdraw this ongoing allowance in exceptional circumstances where there is clear evidence that there has been significant harm to a child when placed in the care of a foster carer. The foster carers will be informed of this authorisation by the Head of Service in writing within three days of the decision being made and given the opportunity to respond to this, reasons will be given. To be explored more

Caring for Young People when they turn 18

When a young person turns 18 but will not be remaining under a 'Staying Put arrangement, payments and fees will continue to be made to foster carers for up to 3 months at the full rate until alternative accommodation has been secured. If the situation remains the same after this time, the placement will be paid for as a Staying Put arrangement for the period YP is in education.

Staying Put

Please see Bromley's Staying Put Policy.

HMRC Advice sheet 236 sets out how staying put arrangements can be eligible for the same qualifying allowance with regard to taxable income as arrangements made for foster carers.

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/helpsheets/hs236.pdf>

Supporting Lodgings:

The supported lodgings service has been set up to provide young people who are venturing into the next phase of their lives, to start to think about living independently, and it is the SL Provider's role to help, aide, assist and appropriately guide their young person through this process, whilst being able to offer a warm, secure base in a family environment, but it is not expected that the young person become a member of the family – so getting the balance right here is very important.

Most young people who enter a Supported Lodgings setting will already be at an appropriate level of independence, and will either be looking for employment / further education or are already in this setting. Our young people will be excited at the prospect of leaving the care system and of having more freedom, and being able to make their own choices, and whilst this is great and we celebrate this, we would expect the supported lodgings provider be able to put appropriate boundaries in place, with young people having a say in any decisions being made.

Most of our young people who have experienced life in the care system will have encountered some form of trauma, and their experiences and feelings do not go away. We would ask that all supported lodgings providers are able to see the signs of when their young person may need to talk, and be there to help our young people, and to understand and help them manage their feelings.

Supported Lodgings Providers need to be resident full time in the property being used for Supported Lodgings; however, it is equally important that you are able to continue with your own lifestyle including work arrangements, social activities and holidays.

The payment for SLP is £250 per week per young person placed. Please refer to the Policy for further information on payments / allowances / benefits.

16) Mileage/Public Transport Allowances

Fostering allowance already covers an element of mileage per week for journeys related to the care of the child in placement. The Fostering/CP allowance includes 10% miles per week travel cost per child, this will therefore be deducted from any mileage claims submitted, (please do not deduct). This means if you are looking after 2 children, your allowances will cover 70 miles per week.

The allowances week runs from Monday to Sunday and, if children arrive and depart midweek, the allowance will be calculated on a pro rata basis.

Expenses should be submitted monthly and include details of all mileage travelled. Permissible items include trips to hospital; taking children to swimming lessons; attending reviews, and transport to and from contact, school journeys or other exceptional travel expenses.

Foster carers can claim mileage or public transport costs for the following:

- a. You are entitled to claim mileage for journeys to and from school where the child is not entitled to a bus pass or the child is unable to use public transport. This mileage **should not** be deducted from the 35 miles.
- b. Journeys to and from court.
- c. Attendance at reviews, case conferences, planning meetings or any meeting within or outside the London Borough of Bromley involving the care of the child.
- d. Medical journeys to and from hospital if the child has an appointment with a consultant or specialist. Also, regular trips for an ongoing medical condition.
- e. Journeys for contact with a child's family.
- f. Mileage and parking will be paid for the attendance at the Foster Carers Advisory Partnership or any meeting involving the development of the service.
- g. Payment is made at 0.4609 pence per mile.

Claims no more than 3 months can be claimed and in the same financial year or the entitlement to claim is lost. Request for payment should be made via the Supervising Social Worker.

Carers cannot claim for the following journeys:

Transport relating to the child as above if this is less than 35 miles per week of the child's Fostering/CP allowance.

- a. Taking and collecting a child from social activities, holiday trips, haircuts and contact with friends
- b. Visits to routine medical and dental appointments
- c. Foster carers will be responsible for the journey to and from training and for parking where necessary. Carers have free access to all Bromley owned car parks. Their details need to be given to the Business support in Permanency.
- d. Parking charges for child related appointments can be claimed

Carers cannot claim for the following travel expenses:

- Parking fines

17) Recovery of overpayments

Foster carers are advised that they check their remittances on every occasion to ensure that they have been paid the correct amount for the work that they have undertaken. If a foster carer is aware of any errors whether this is about an underpayment or overpayment, then they should bring this to the attention of the Finance Officer as soon as possible.

18) Household and vehicle insurance

As a foster carer it is very important that home insurance policies cover foster children. Carers should take time to understand and be clear about how fostering children will affect their existing policy or a new insurance policy that they may apply for.

Foster carers are responsible for their own household and vehicle insurance, if applicable, to cover any claims for damages.

If there is a claim made on household insurance from damage made by a child, then we will pay the excess. Carers need to make their SSW aware of these damages immediately.

If a claim is under £200, we will refund this.

The Fostering Network recommends that carers ask their insurance company for written confirmation that they have included they are foster carers on their policy.

The London Borough of Bromley endorses this view.

19) Benefits and Tax Credits

Please note foster cares are self-employed.

Please contact HMRC for advice or on-line at www.gov.uk or <https://www.gov.uk/foster-carers/claiming-benefits-while-fostering>

Information regarding benefits is also available from the Fostering Network website: <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/advice-information/finances/claiming-benefits>