



Payment for Skills Foster Carer Fee Levels

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1. Introduction and Legal Framework

The Statutory Guidance for Fostering and Standard 28 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering require the fostering service to provide foster carers with a clear information on the fees and allowances that are paid to them.

Worcestershire Children First want to give you the best possible support and will ensure that all carers receive a financial allowance to help with the cost of looking after the child in their care.

Worcestershire Children First uses a Payment for Skills scheme, that is linked to post approval expectations for each level including training and development.

Worcestershire Children First recognise that looking after a child or young person has financial implications which is why as a foster carer you will be paid a weekly fostering allowance which is made up of a fee for yourself but also a day to day living allowance for the child. The day to day living allowance will vary depending on the age and needs of the child/ren in your care. There are a number of different factors which contribute to how much foster carers are paid per week, such as the type of fostering that you do.

1.1 Foster Care Allowance

Worcestershire Children First Fostering pays a Foster Care Allowance to all foster carers to enable them to look after the child or children placed with them.

1.2 Fees

In addition Worcester Children First has a payment for fees scheme which pays a weekly fee per child to foster carers, including family and friend foster carers, who have a child or children placed with them; this is paid on one of four levels. The criteria that foster carers must meet for each of the fee levels is set out below.

Alongside the professional fee and allowance, all of our foster carers also receive an annual membership to Foster Talk. Foster Talk is the UK's leading independent, not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting Foster Carers.

2. Payment for Skills

Foster Carers will be paid a fee if they are able to demonstrate that they have the required skills and knowledge to foster and that they are committed to developing these further through ongoing training and development

Foster carers approved by Worcester Children First Fostering are paid fees in respect of children placed with them on a four-tier system, with Placement Plus Carers paid according to a separate system.

Foundation Level

This applies to approval as a temporary foster carer under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning Placement and Case Review Regulations. For family and friends' carers this will be an assessment relating to a specific child\children.

Entry Requirements:

Have some experience of childcare. For instance, direct parenting experience / looking after other's children. Evidence a commitment to self-development through training

Requirement.

- It is expected that Core Training is completed within the required timescales



Financial Support:

1. Weekly Allowances. When you are approved as a temporary carer, you will receive the age-related foster care allowance for each child from the date the child was placed with you
2. No Fee

Level 1 – At Approval

Entry Requirements:

Have experience of childcare. For instance, direct parenting experience / looking after other's children / paid or voluntary work in childcare / previous fostering experience

Requirement.

It is expected that ongoing training is completed and ongoing to reflect upon professional experience and relate this to the fostering task It is required that you will complete the training support and development standards for foster carers within the required timescales

Financial Support:

1. Weekly Allowances
2. Fee – Level 1 Fee

Level 2

In addition to the requirements of Level 1,

Requirement.

- A minimum of 3 years active experience as foster carers. You should be able to demonstrate that you have been actively caring for a significant proportion of available time.
- It is expected that ongoing training is completed and an ongoing to reflect upon professional experience and relate this to the fostering task. Completion of the Training Development & Standards for Foster Carers and mandatory training within the required timescales
- At each of your Annual Review, your ability to demonstrate the skills and competencies required for Level 2 will be considered & progression to Level 3 is appropriate.

Financial Support:

1. Weekly Allowances
2. Fee – Level 2 Fee

Level 3

In addition to the requirements of Level 1 and 2.

Requirement.

- Minimum of 5 years active fostering experience. Carers should demonstrate that they have been actively caring for a significant proportion of available time.
- Demonstrated commitment to training & ongoing development of fostering practice by attending courses & events. These could include training, support groups or the Foster Carer Forum. It is expected that ongoing training is completed and an ongoing to reflect upon professional experience and relate this to the fostering task.
- We would encourage carers to attend social events. Where a single carer is approved the minimum requirement will be attendance at three events in any one year. Where couples are approved together the minimum requirement will be four events with each carer expected to have attended at least one event.
- At each of your Annual Review, your ability to demonstrate the skills and competencies required for Level 3 will be considered.

Financial Support:

1. Weekly Allowances
2. Fee – Level 3 Fee

3. Process for progression

The decision concerning progression through the levels will rest with the relevant Team Manager (Fostering and Kinship). Together with the foster carer, the Fostering Social Worker will complete an 'Application for progression through payment for skills' and include a recommendation stating whether or not the foster carer should progress within the scheme. When the Team Manager has made a decision, the foster carer will be notified of the outcome in writing,

4. Non-Compliance of required training

Foster Carers will be paid a fee if they are able to demonstrate that they have the required skills and knowledge to foster and that they are committed to developing these further through training. The decision concerning progression through the levels will rest with the relevant Team Manager.

Section 1.1 of the Foster Carer Agreement states that WCFF will offer the FC support 'To assist Carers with their Learning and Development to ensure that they can meet the needs of the children and young people placed with them by providing assistance and support including where appropriate a Foster Carer mentor to support Carers to complete their Training Support and Development workbook within required timescales,

WCFF will provide a programme of learning and development courses, including induction training in essential skills and knowledge and developmental training to allow Carers to meet the criteria set out in the Payment for Skills Scheme.

Core Training.

It is expected that the following Core Training will be completed within the stated timescales:

Emergency First Aid - to be completed by the one carer during the Assessment Stage, and by the second carer within 6 months of approval.

Safeguarding - to be completed by both carers during the Assessment Stage

Safer Caring - to be completed by both carers during the Assessment Stage

Understanding Behaviour and Attachment - to be completed by both carers during the Assessment Stage

Valuing Difference - e-learning course to be completed by both carers during the Assessment Stage. Then face to face / video conferencing session to be completed by both carers within two years of approval.

Family Time (Contact) - to be completed by one carer within 12 months of approval.

What is Health - to be completed by one carer within 2 years of approval.

Refresher training - Core training must be refreshed every 3 years.

In order to meet the Fostering Regulations, you will need to complete these courses in the required timescales. You will not be able to progress to level 2 under the Payment for Skills if these courses are not completed. Training completed will be recorded in your Learning & Development Plan.

Support for Training,

As people have different styles of learning, there will be different types of training available; Face to face, video conferencing and e-learning. In addition, there is access to the Computer Course scheme with the provision of IT equipment, IT training and a digital champion plus support from a Fostering Trainer Mentor.

Non-Completion of the required training.

If you are having difficulty completing the required training in the expected timescales, you need to discuss this with your Fostering Social Worker who can discuss appropriate support and review and agree reasonable timescales to complete the training.

LEVEL 1

If the required training is not completed, despite the provision of additional support, then a formal meeting will be convened with you and your partner (if applicable), your Fostering Social Worker and the relevant Fostering or Kinship Team Manager.

This meeting will focus on formulating a 'Training Action Plan', which will provide the opportunity to discuss the reasons behind the non-completion of the required training and agree timescales to complete it. The meeting will also consider any additional support which may be required. A Review Meeting will be scheduled in to review the Training Action Plan.

The Registered Manager for WCFF will have oversight of the plan. If the Training Requirements are not met following the conclusion of this plan and you are unable to demonstrate you are meeting the fostering criteria, you will not be able progress to the next level. You will receive a copy of this plan.

LEVEL 2 AND 3

If you have progressed to being a Level 2 or Level 3 Foster Carer and are unable to meet the training expectation, If the required training is not completed, despite the provision of additional support, then a formal meeting will be convened with you and your partner (if applicable), your Fostering Social Worker and the relevant Fostering or Kinship Team Manager.

This meeting will focus on formulating a 'Training Action Plan', which will provide the opportunity to discuss the reasons behind the non-completion of the required training and agree timescales to complete it. The meeting will also consider any additional support which may be required.

A Review Meeting will be scheduled in to review the Training Action Plan. The Registered Manager for WCFF will have oversight of the plan. If the Training Requirements are not met following the conclusion of this plan, and you are unable to demonstrate you are meeting the fostering criteria, of a Level 2 or 3 Foster Carer, then consideration will be given to downgrading your level of approval. The Registered Manager will be consulted in regard to this decision. You will be provided with a copy of the plan/minutes

Foster carers non-completion of the required training will raise concerns regarding their ability to look after the child in their care and ensure the child's needs are appropriately safeguarded. This will bring into question their suitability to be carers which could result in a Review with Worcestershire Children First Fostering Panel and an ADM decision regarding the termination of their approval.

5. Make Representation

If you are not in agreement with the decision you will have 28 days in which to make written representation to the Registered Manager.

If no written representation is received within 28 days, the Registered Manager will proceed to confirm the decision.

If you make written representation to the Registered Manager, the Registered Manager will consider this alongside the most recent review papers and any other relevant documents and will proceed to a decision.

The foster carers will be notified in writing of the final decision of the Registered Manager.

6.Placement Plus

Placement Plus is a fostering scheme for children and young people who have a range of complex needs. Many of them will have experienced a number of placement moves and will be at risk of being placed in residential placement. Alternatively, they will be young people who are in residential placements and although their needs continue to be complex the assessment is that they could be met in a family placement with a high level of support. Placement Plus carers will receive the Placement Plus fee and the age- related Foster Care Allowance for the child or young person.

7.Payment of Foster Carer Allowances and Fees

The Foster care Allowance and the fee is paid fortnightly in arrears. These are reviewed annually.

Information on the fees and age related FCA will be sent to carers at the beginning of each financial year.

Foster carers receive payment through the BACS system, which allows for transfer of the payment directly into the recipient's bank account. A mandate to set up payment through BACS is available from the finance department.

For other payments relating to the child or young person please refer to Worcestershire Children First Fostering 's Financial Support to Foster Carers.

8. Emergency Payments

In some circumstances it will be possible to make an emergency payment to foster carers at the start of a placement. This must be agreed by a Fostering and Kinship Team Manager and should not exceed one week's fee plus FCA. Any amount paid by emergency payment will be deducted from the first standard payment.

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