

Foster Care Finances

April 2026

Last Reviewed: March 2026

Reviewed by: Carol Norrington / Clark McAuley / Finance / Business Support Management

Next Review Date: March 2027



Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Current Age-Related Allowances	1
3. Costs covered by the Fostering Allowance	1
3.1 24-hour Care and Accommodation	1
3.2 A Good Supply of Basic Clothing, Shoes and School Uniforms (Summer and Winter).....	1
3.3 Equipment and Resources	2
3.4 Holidays and Educational Trips for Children and Young People	2
3.5 Family Time/ Contact.....	2
3.6 Birthday and Festival Gifts to Children and Young People	3
3.7 Telephone calls.....	3
3.8 Toiletries and Cosmetics	3
3.9 Transport/Mileage.....	3
3.10 Transport Costs Covered by the Child's Social Work Team	3
3.11 Glasses and Contact Lenses, Hearing Aids and other Physical Aids	4
4. Fostering Skills Payment	4
5. Pocket Money.....	5
6. Savings and Money Management for Children and Young People	5
7. Christmas/Festival Allowances	6
8. Birthday Allowances.....	6
9. Summer Payments.....	6
10. Initial Clothing payment.....	6
11. Setting up Payment.....	6
12. Insurance	7
13. Specific Allowance Payments	7
13.1 Children who must be placed alone.....	7
13.2 Children with complex health care needs (including mental health) and/or disabilities.....	7
13.3 Children out of Education	8
13.4 A Child Experiencing Enuresis.....	8
13.5 Significantly Unregulated or Challenging Behaviour	8
13.6 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children	8
13.7 Caring for a sibling group of three plus children	8
13.8 How to Apply.....	8
13.9 Reviewing	9
13.10 More than One Qualifying Factor	9
14. Specialist Schemes/Skills Payments	9
14.1 One to One Foster Care	9

14.2 Mockingbird Hub Home Carers.....	9
14.3 Hope Foster Carers	10
14.4 Parent and Child Carers.....	10
14.5 Emergency Duty Carers	10
15. Short Breaks for Disabled Children	11
16. Day Care.....	11
17. Sleepover Payments	12
18. Childcare Cover Costs for Training.....	12
19. Children at Residential School.....	13
20. Service Activity	13
21. Financial Support during an Investigation	13
22. Retainers.....	13
22.1 Process:	14
22.2 Extending:	14
22.3 Expectations:	14
23. Staying Put	14
24. Supported Lodgings Payments.....	15
24.1 Young People's Personal Spending	15
24.2 Specific Allowances in Supported Lodgings.....	15
25. Payment Processes	15

1. Introduction

Payments made to Surrey County Council Foster Carers comprise of two elements:

- An age-related allowance, which is wholly for the costs of the child's care, is paid to all approved Foster Carers, including connected person Foster Carers who have been granted temporary approval.
- A skills level payment for carers at Levels 2 or 3, or for those fostering on a Specialist Scheme

Payments are made to all approved Foster Carers in accordance with the arrangements outlined in this document, regardless of whether the child(ren) they care for are known or related to them.

Connected carers who have temporary approval under Regulation 24 are also eligible for all allowances if they meet the qualifying criteria.

Approved adopters who may have been granted temporary approval as Foster Carers for the child pending placement for adoption will be entitled to the weekly age-related allowance for the child. They will not ordinarily be entitled to any other payments.

2. Current Age-Related Allowances

The Fostering age bands and age-related allowances from 1st April 2026.

Age	Weekly Payment
0 – 4 years	£218.08
5 – 10 years	£247.35
11-13 years	£329.76
14 – 18 years	£383.12

The weekly Fostering allowance is to be used by the Carer to cover all but the most exceptional costs of Fostering, including the costs directly associated in providing care for the child i.e. buying food, clothing, contributing towards housing costs, utility bills etc. It is expected that the whole of the allowance is either used for the care of the child or saved for the child.

Money spent directly on the child should cover such items as clothes, hobbies and activities, pocket money, mobile phone credit, specific personal needs, including toiletries. Fixed amounts are not recommended in recognition of different family lifestyles.

3. Costs covered by the Fostering Allowance

3.1 24-hour Care and Accommodation

- Accommodation, food and safe care that meets the Child or Young Person's needs.

3.2 A Good Supply of Basic Clothing, Shoes and School Uniforms (Summer and Winter)

- School uniform, general sports activity clothing and other general clothing. If the child changes school, starts a new school, or needs replacement uniform within the first 4 weeks of them coming to live with you, this will be reimbursed.

- If the child attends a private or residential school where the uniform costs can be extreme, and beyond what is a reasonable cost for a Foster Carer to meet, additional financial support may be available through discussion with the Fostering Service and Childrens Social Work team.
- Any replacement clothing including special requirements, e.g. unusual sizes or for children or young people with disabilities.
- Funding of up to £100 for emergency clothing can be agreed by the Supervising Social Worker in situations where the child has come to live with you without sufficient clothing. Children who have been looked after for a reasonable amount of time and are moving from another Foster Carer should not need this and all efforts will be made to retrieve the child's belongings from the previous Carer/provider. Possessions should not be placed in black bin liner type bags.
- A good quality suitcase/bag for the child to use.

3.3 Equipment and Resources

- Individual sports or hobby tuition and equipment.
- Stationery, calculators, schoolbooks, drawing instruments, school bags, additional materials to support school or education activities including but not limited to arts and crafts materials and foodstuffs to support food technology lessons.
- Children of school age shall have access to a computer in the home for education, homework and recreational purposes. It shall be connected to the internet and be appropriately safeguarded against the use of inappropriate material.
- Resources relating to cultural/religious needs: Negotiation with the Fostering Service if cost is especially high or frequent.
- Ensuring appropriate safeguarding measures for all resources and equipment, including future developments with changing technology e.g. Wi-Fi.
- Basic costs relating to keeping day to day memories for the child. The Supervising Social Worker can consider exceptional expenditure for one-off life-story books/work.

3.4 Holidays and Educational Trips for Children and Young People

- Children accompanying their Foster Carers on family holidays.
- Any family outings.
- The cost of any trips that form part of the Child or Young Person's schooling.

NB. Where the trip is clearly educational in nature, the Fostering Service will pay the balance, after the foster carer has paid an initial £50 contribution for each trip. Where the trip is more leisure based (ie PGL) a contribution may be negotiated between the Service Manager for the children's case-holding Team and the Virtual School.

3.5 Family Time/ Contact

- Foster Carers should usually facilitate, transport and promote family time with siblings, parents and relatives as specified in the child or young person's Care Plan. Foster Carers are

eligible to receive full Fostering mileage (without subtracting 20 miles per day) for family time transport which is part of the child's agreed care plan and is funded by the case-holding team. To avoid dispute it is best practice that transport reimbursement conditions be agreed in writing by the appropriate manager of the child's Social Work team, in advance. Please use a separate finance claim form per child to claim mileage or expenses from the child's Social Work team as this will speed up the handling of your claim. •

3.6 Birthday and Festival Gifts to Children and Young People

- Birthday and festival allowance will be paid to the carer by the service to cover the child's gift, party and additional festivities attended with the foster family. The money should also enable the child to buy gifts for their family. Unspent birthday or festival allowances should be returned to the service.

3.7 Telephone calls

- Within reason and in agreement with the child's Social Worker, calls to family members and friends are to be included in the cost of care.
- These must be within reason and agreed with the Social Worker. Any costs associated with the use of a mobile phone should be agreed with the Social Worker. Specific guidance on internet and smart phone use can be found in the Foster Carers Handbook and in this document.



Social Media and
Internet Policy.docx

3.8 Toiletries and Cosmetics

- All toiletries, including skin and hair care products.
- The cost of a regular haircut. For special hair care or toiletry requirements the Fostering Service may contribute.

3.9 Transport/Mileage

- Foster Carers are expected to provide day-to-day transport (whether by car, train, bus or other form of transport) of children and young people placed with them, up to 20 miles per day. "Day to day" transporting includes school runs within the catchment area of the foster home, transport to activities, clubs, medical and dental appointments, therapy sessions, university visits, anything that would be considered part of caring for a child in care. Mileage for the above is payable at 45p per mile. All mileage expense claims for such activities must therefore deduct the initial 20 miles per day.
- If the Foster Carer uses the train or other type of transport to accompany a child anywhere besides family time or schools outside the catchment area, the Foster Carer can only claim the equivalent of the mileage they would have been eligible to claim had they driven instead.
- Mileage to and from Foster Carer training in excess of 20 miles per day on the basis that training is a requirement of maintaining a Foster Carer's approval. However reasonable parking costs incurred at training venues can be claimed in full.

3.10 Transport Costs Covered by the Child's Social Work Team

- The child's Social Work team is responsible for mileage costs for transport to schools outside the catchment area (3-mile radius of the foster home). Where a child attends school outside the catchment area the full mileage is reimbursed. Payments can be processed by the Fostering Service in the first instance, in order to reduce delay. When making your claim please use the appropriate drop-down box to indicate the type of mileage being claimed.
- Mileage for transport to and from family time/contact will be paid in full by the child's Social Work team and must be agreed prior to placement with the child's Social Work team's Team Manager. Payments can be processed by the Fostering Service in the first instance, in order to reduce delay. When making your claim please use the appropriate drop-down box to indicate the type of mileage being claimed.
- Funding to cover the young person's costs for taking public transport to school or college is not straightforward and therefore should be negotiated between the Foster Carer and the child's Social Work team. It is advisable that Foster Carers seek written agreement of what mileage costs will be reimbursed at the time of the initial placement or at the Placement Planning Meeting.
- All other additional mileage can be agreed by the Fostering Team Manager in accordance with the above policy.

3.11 Glasses and Contact Lenses, Hearing Aids and other Physical Aids

- Provision of glasses, contact lenses, hearing aids and other physical aids if required. Replacements in the event of accidental damage or loss can be negotiated with Fostering and child's Social Work team on a case-by-case basis.

4. Fostering Skills Payment

Surrey County Council believes in ensuring that all our Foster Carers develop their skills on an on-going basis, so they are well trained and equipped to perform the complex tasks that are required of them in their day-to-day care of children and young people. We strive for the highest standards and Foster Carers are rewarded for their skills through a system of payment levels which reflects their level of training and expertise in meeting the needs of children.

The Fostering Skills Payment is paid per child and is dependent on the agreed skills level (achieved through learning and development) of Carers. The criteria for Skills Levels are detailed in the [Welcome to the Foster Carers Handbook](#).

Skills Payments	Weekly Payment Per Child in Placement
Level 1	£0.00
Level 2	£113.46
Level 3	£226.92
Other Skills Payments	Weekly Payment
Enhanced/One to One Payment	£578.76
Mockingbird Home Hub Carer	£578.76
Hope Foster Carer	£578.76
Parent and Child carer	£578.76
Emergency Duty Carer	£578.76

5. Pocket Money

The service recognises that the amount of pocket money provided to a child will vary according to your own household lifestyle, the arrangements for your own children, and whether you pay directly for activities and outings. It is recommended that even very young children are provided with pocket money for them to spend as they wish. This is an essential part of their development.

Foster Carers have requested guidance on the amount of pocket money that young people should receive. The table below recommends the amount of pocket money to be given directly to the young person to spend as they wish. The lower amount is where carers are paying for a range of activities and/or outings. Where Foster Carers are not funding such activities, they should provide the higher amount. Please note, at the request of the child/young person, some pocket money can be paid into a savings account.

A basic amount of pocket money should be given without usually being dependent on fostered children completing household chores. Depending on the Foster Carer's usual household rules, which include arrangements for their own children, they may encourage older children to be able to obtain additional pocket money through completing small jobs.

Age Range	Minimum Amount of weekly Pocket Money
5 to 6 years	£1 to £2
7 to 8 years	£2 to £3
9-10 years	£3 to £5
11-12 years	£5 to £7.50
13-14 years	£7 to £10
15 + years	£10 to £15

6. Savings and Money Management for Children and Young People

In line with the Finance and Saving Policy for Looked After Children, savings at source will only be taken once the child has been a Looked After Child for 16 weeks. Therefore, any Foster Carer looking after a child within their first 16 weeks of being Looked After, will receive the full child allowance. After the child has been Looked After for 16 weeks, the child allowance received by the carer will reduce by £5 per week and this money will be added to the child's savings account. This is in addition to the £150 that is given by Surrey County Council once a child has been Looked After for 12 months. These savings are managed by Surrey Business Support Finance Team and added to the child's JISA or CTF.

Further information about this scheme and how it operates for carers and children will be is available on Surreys Tri-X Procedure Manual.

[Finance and Savings Policy for Looked after Children 0-18 Years Final Feb 25.docx](#)

As part of learning life skills and money-management, children may also have an instant access / online app or banking account opened by the carer as soon as suitable as part of their development and identity. The child's allocated Social Worker will support the carer to ensure the safe transfer of the money when a child leaves your home. The Supervising Social Worker

will discuss any additional savings made into this account with Foster Carers in their supervision.

If carers would like to move any pre saved money into the Junior ISA held by Surrey, they can contact Surrey Children's Finance Savings team on childrensfinance.savings@surreycc.gov.uk

The Junior ISA account is monitored by Surrey County Council and will be held for the child until they are 18 years of age. More details about Junior ISAs can be found at <https://www.sharefound.org/>

7. Christmas/Festival Allowances

The equivalent of one week's age-related allowance per child is paid for any child living with you on December 25th (or another nominated festival date). Payments will be made four weeks in advance. Unless advised otherwise, this payment will be made in respect of Christmas, however if this needs to be paid for another religious festival, please advise your Supervising Social Worker in good time.

8. Birthday Allowances

Payment will be the equivalent to one week's age-related child's allowance, per child placed. The qualifying period for this is the child's birthday. Payment will be made two weeks in advance.

9. Summer Payments

Foster Carers will be paid if they actually have a child in their care over the summer period. The summer payment will be the equivalent to one week's age-related child's allowance, per child placed, paid in the pay run immediately prior to the 6 weeks summer holidays.

The funding will be pro-rata so if Foster Carers agree to look after a child half-way through the summer, they will receive half of the allowance. If a child leaves the care of a Foster Carer part way through the summer period, the allowance will be re-calculated on a daily rate. Short Breaks Carers are not affected by this scheme. Respite/sleepover Foster Carers who have been approved and who look after children during the summer weeks will be paid on a pro-rata basis. If carers have been overpaid for this period they will be asked to repay any amounts, and so carers are reminded to advise the service promptly if children move from their care to avoid overpayment where possible.

10. Initial Clothing payment

Supervising Social Workers can authorise £100 to cover costs of emergency clothing/supplies if the child arrives in a foster home without any possessions. Receipts must be provided and added to the expenses claim form.

11. Setting up Payment

Any Foster Carer approved at panel are entitled to claim up to £500 "setting up" allowance as soon as they have accepted the first child into their home on a full time (not sleep over) basis. This payment is to support carers with the initial costs of fostering such as a new cot, appropriate car seat, bedroom furniture etc. Carers will be asked to complete an expenses form and include receipts in order for these costs to be reimbursed.

12. Insurance

It is the responsibility of Foster Carers to be appropriately insured for any loss or damage to vehicles or property that arise in relation to their Fostering duties. If claims are excessive, discussion needs to take place with the Fostering Service.

Carers can claim an annual payment of £150 if they are caring for a child aged 11 and over, to contribute to the cost of specialist house insurance that covers deliberate theft, malicious damage, and fostered children's possessions. To qualify for this payment carers must have approval terms that include care for children aged 11 and over and have a child of that age living with them at time of the claim.

The expectation will be that Foster Carers will make claims on this insurance as necessary, and the Fostering Service will only consider any costs that the insurance company has declined to pay on a case-by-case basis and within the same 12-month period of the claim.

For under 11-year-olds, the service will consider whether a contribution for a similar policy is merited on a case-by-case basis, taking account of the child's known needs.

All Foster Carers must notify their motor insurance company that they are fostering and transporting children as part of this role in order to gain clarity from their insurance company of what level of cover they are required to have. Some insurers may require you to add business cover insurance to your policy to ensure you are appropriately covered. There may be a minimal fee to have this level of cover and Foster Carers are invited to notify their Supervising Social Worker of any difficulties in meeting these costs.

13. Specific Allowance Payments

A Specific Allowance (SA) of £130.49 per week can be made to Foster Carers, Short Break Carers, Supported Lodgings Carers and those Carers offering care under Staying Put arrangements in relation to a child's specific needs.

Specific Allowance payments are granted to provide additional care or to meet costs relating to a child's needs which are over and above what is reasonably expected for another Looked-After child of a similar age and what is already provided for by the standard foster payments. The Specific Allowance is not granted solely on the basis of a diagnosis, but to meet specific additional care or costs required on a day-to-day basis.

The needs /circumstances that may qualify for a Specific Allowance are:

13.1 Children who must be placed alone

Where a Foster Carer is approved to look after more than one child but agrees to care for a child that the service has decided needs to be the only child under the age of 18 in the home. In this instance, SA will be paid in recognition of the Foster Carers being unable to receive fostering payments for another child.

13.2 Children with complex health care needs (including mental health) and/or disabilities

Where a child with a significant disability or complex health care need requires a greater level of supervision, support and care than any other Looked-After child of the same age.

In some circumstances, a second Specific Allowance payment may be made if there are additional costs arising which are not covered by Disability Living Allowance or other specific benefits, such as night care throughout the night, specialist items of clothing being required, additional heating bills/electrical equipment being required. Payments should usually be agreed during the Placement Planning stage.

13.3 Children out of Education

In the instance of a child being of education age (5-18 years) but:

- Has being excluded, or
- Does not have a school place allocated, or
- is otherwise not in education due to circumstances agreed and known to the Social Worker and Fostering Service prior to the child moving to the Carers, or
- Is refusing to attend school for more than 3 consecutive days
- The SA will be paid pro rata for each day the child would ordinarily be in education (therefore excluding school holidays and weekends) after the third day of absence.

13.4 A Child Experiencing Enuresis

Where a child experiences enuresis resulting in the Foster Carer needing to launder bedding and clothes more frequently. Payments will be made in recognition of the additional costs involved in frequent laundry.

13.5 Significantly Unregulated or Challenging Behaviour

A specific allowance payment will be made if it is agreed by the Supervising Social Worker and Team Manager that a child's behaviour is more dysregulated or physically challenging than another Looked-After child of the same age, and being beyond what is expected for a Foster Carer to be able to manage, given their individual training and expertise. The SA will be made in recognition of the additional supervision or care needed to manage this level of behaviour within a family home or that the Foster Carer or other household members may need to take additional care of their own well-being. This payment is not intended to cover the costs of breakages and Foster Carers will still be asked to claim for damage or breakages through their household insurance.

13.6 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

A SA payment will be made for the first six weeks of an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child arriving in the country and moving into Foster Care. These payments are made in recognition of the additional level of care needed to ensure the child attends necessary appointments and due to the child being out of education.

13.7 Caring for a sibling group of three plus children

In order to support good practice in relation to enabling siblings to remain living together throughout their childhood, as of 1st November 2025, a carer who agrees to care for a sibling group of 3 or more children, will receive a Specific Allowance payment for the third and any subsequent children for the length of time the three children remain in the home.

13.8 How to Apply

The Supervising Social Worker will make an application via the LCS financial form to their Team Manager (or another if their Team Manager is not available) detailing under which category/categories the SA is being requested. The Team Manager, with an understanding of circumstances following discussion in supervision, along with reading information available on

LCS, will either support the request or not and reassign the decision to the finance team. This process allows for an audit trail, regular reviewing, and transparency.

13.9 Reviewing

Whilst the specific allowance can be paid for an unspecified period, the allowance must be reviewed on three a monthly basis. The allowance should be considered on a case-by-case basis, particularly in the case of a child with a disability/complex health care needs where a diagnosis has been made with little or no likelihood of change.

If a further period of SA is requested, the Supervising Social Worker will request an extension on the LCS financial form to their Team Manager.

Evidence must be provided of what support has been offered to the Carer, what training and actions the Carers have attended/taken to help the child, and any progress made.

13.10 More than One Qualifying Factor

If there is more than one qualifying factor the Supervising Social Worker can request the relevant number of SA payments up to a maximum of two separate specific allowances.

14. Specialist Schemes/Skills Payments

The Fostering Service operates a number of specialist fostering schemes to meet the needs of children in Surrey who need the support of Foster Carers. Carers on these schemes will receive a Skills Payment of £578.76 per week plus an age-related child's allowance. Households providing care on a specialist scheme will have at least one carer at home full time to reflect the intensive support needed.

14.1 One to One Foster Care

In order to have Foster Carers who are able to look after our children with considerable emotional and behavioural needs we recognise the need to pay a specialist skills rate to some Foster Carers who are willing and able to care for them. Households will usually have at least one carer at home full time to meet the needs of the child.

Where a child has been cared for within a children's residential home and there is an assessed need and Service Management agreement for a child to have one to one support to help them "step across" to a foster home, or they need one to one care in a foster home to live in whilst waiting to move to a residential home, the Specialist Skills rate of £578.76. per week can be paid to the Foster Carer (in addition to the child's age-related allowance) when a child is living with them. The payment can be made for up to 6 months but must be reviewed monthly as the child is expected to make progress within one-to-one care arrangements.

It is recognised that a carer offering care under a One-to-One arrangement may need additional support by way of additional supervisory visits and sleepover breaks. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis and should be discussed with the Supervising Social Worker.

14.2 Mockingbird Hub Home Carers

A Hub Home Carer is an approved Foster Carer who is the central point in a network of Fostering families — known as a Mockingbird constellation. The Hub Home Carer will provide planned and emergency care to the children within the foster homes they support. This will include overnight care as well as providing planned and emergency back up support for the children's main Carers.

The Hub Home, which will have at least one Carer at home, full time, is at the heart of the community — providing support to adults and children. As well as the care of the children, they provide emotional support and guidance to the Foster Carers and families within their constellation. The role will be carried out alongside and with the ongoing support of the Supervising Social Worker for the Hub Home Carer and the Supervising Social Workers for the families within the constellation.

This support is both formal and informal, and includes hosting and arranging planned social events, monthly constellation meetings and personal development opportunities for satellite Carers within the constellation (satellite carers).

The constellation will consist of no more than 10 satellite Carers and up to 18 Looked-After children.

A Hub Carer will be paid £578.76 per week. Please see separate T&Cs for further information.

14.3 Hope Foster Carers

Hope Foster Carers are part of the Extended Hope service who support young people who are returning home after spending time in an in-patient mental health provision. Hope Foster Carers provide care for up to 12 weeks with the support of the Extended Hope multi-agency team. They provide very specialist care and manage high levels of vulnerability and risk. They work closely with the Extended Hope residential unit, and Hope day program, including having the option of working in the units as a sessional worker when they are not caring for a young person in a fostering arrangement. They receive a specialist skills payment of £578.76 and a child's age-related allowance when a child is living with them. Please see separate Terms and Conditions for this scheme.

14.4 Parent and Child Carers

As well as providing care for one or both parents and their children, parent and child Foster Carers have a role in supporting, teaching and role-modelling good child-care to the parents. They will also be involved in observing, and in some cases, assessing the quality of care provided and may have to provide reports or statements to the Family Court. They receive a specialist skills payment of £578.76, an age-related allowance for the child, and an allowance for the parent (equivalent to that provided for a 14–18 year-old). If the parent leaves the arrangement and it is agreed by the child's Social Work team, the Foster Carers and the Fostering Service that the child should remain with the carer then they will receive an age-related allowance for the child, a level 3 skills payment for the time the child lives with them, and a specific allowance for six weeks after the parent leaves.

For more information please refer to the Practice Guidance for Parent Child Carers in Surrey's Procedural Manual <https://trixcms.trixonline.co.uk/api/assets/surreycs/547820d1-8667-466b-81ab-6a53cf3a4b2e/parent-and-child-fostering-practice-guidance-jul-24.docx>

14.5 Emergency Duty Carers

Foster Carers who are wholly available on the Emergency Duty rota, meaning they are the first point of contact for the Emergency Duty Team who may need to find a home for a child outside of office hours, will be paid the Specialist Skills payment of £578.76 full time (including rostered rest days) and appropriate child-related allowances when a child(ren) are living with them. These carers will have an approval range of 0-18 and have one carer in the household available full-time for fostering.

Foster Carers who provide ad-hoc cover for the Emergency Duty Team Rota and who have an approval range of 0-18 years will be able to receive the £578.76 skills payment pro-rata for their time available to the rota and when caring for a child placed by the Emergency Duty Team. They need to have no other substantive commitments during their time on the rota and caring for a child in order that they can fulfil the requirements of the role.

Carers, not on the EDT rota, but who agree to look after a child outside of usual office hours in an emergency will receive a one-off payment of £50 per child.

For more information please refer to the Practice Guidance for Surrey Emergency Duty Foster Care in Surreys Procedure Manual

<https://trixcms.trixonline.co.uk/api/assets/surreycs/b6e66d02-cfae-4d6d-a2c9-a5b13cda5123/practice-guidance-for-edt-march-2026.docx>

15. Short Breaks for Disabled Children

Foster Carers who are approved to provide short break care for children with disabilities, i.e. those being supported by the CWD team, receive an age-related allowance covering the period of care.

	0 - 4 years	5 - 10 years	11 - 13 years	14 - 18 years
1 hour	£12.89	£13.73	£16.08	£18.29
4 hours	£51.56	£54.92	£64.32	£73.16
Day Care 5 hours and over	£64.47	£68.64	£80.42	£91.48
Overnight	£93.06	£97.24	£109.02	£120.08

16. Day Care

Practice guidance has been developed outlining the principles and circumstances under which additional payments will be made to Foster Carers providing day care, respite breaks and babysitting. This can be found in the Resources section of the Procedure Manual and Foster Care Handbook here [Local Resources](#).

Where day care has been agreed by the Service in order to support the stability of a child's home, we will pay carers the equivalent of the National Minimum Wage (£12.71 from 1 April 2026) to a maximum of 5 hours. For second or third children from the same fostering household, payment will be 80% of the hourly rate (£10.17). In these arrangements, payments to the main carer will continue to be paid. If day care/sleepover support is not being arranged by recommendation of the service to support placement stability, payment to the main carer will be stopped.

For periods of over five hours carers will receive a day care rate (which is equivalent to the child's weekly age-related allowance, plus the carers usual skills payment, divided by seven). For second or third children from the same fostering household, payment will be 80% of the day care rate.

If the day care arrangement includes taking the child to school / family time / therapy session the normal mileage rates can also be claimed. If the main carer is in receipt of Specific Allowance payments, these shall be paid pro rata for the day care provided.

Examples of payments are as follows:

	0 - 4 years	5 - 10 years	11 - 13 years	14 - 18 years
First child				
1 hour	£12.71	£12.71	£12.71	£12.71
4 hours	£50.84	£50.84	£50.84	£50.84
Day care 5 + hours Skills level 1	£31.15	£35.34	£47.11	£54.73
Day care 5 + hours Skills level 2	£47.36	£51.55	£63.32	£70.94
Day care 5 + hours Skills level 3	£63.57	£67.76	£79.53	£87.15
Day care 5 + hours Specialist (1:1)	£113.83	£118.02	£129.79	£137.41
Additional children (per child)				
1 hour	£10.17	£10.17	£10.17	£10.17
4 hours	£40.68	£40.68	£40.68	£40.68
Day care 5 + hours Skills level 1	£24.92	£28.27	£37.69	£43.78
Day care 5 + hours Skills level 2	£37.89	£41.24	£50.66	£56.75
Day care 5 + hours Skills level 3	£50.86	£54.21	£63.62	£69.72

17. Sleepover Payments

Where it has been agreed by the service that the child should have planned overnight breaks with another carer as part of the child's care plan or as part of agreed support to enable the arrangement to remain stable, all payments to the main carer for that child will continue. The respite carer will receive the full allowance applicable to the placement, pro rata. Where the service has not agreed that this planned sleepover is required for placement stability, payments to the main carer will cease.

If you use someone from within your personal network, or a back-up carer, to provide a sleepover to the child in your care, financial arrangements are to be agreed between you – the Fostering Service will not be able to make payments to these carers on your behalf.

18. Childcare Cover Costs for Training

Foster Carers who are in their first year of their Fostering career can claim £25 towards childcare costs when attending any level one courses from the training programme.

From the second year and thereafter, carers can claim £25 three times a year towards childcare costs.

You cannot pay your partner to provide childcare, but the person providing your childcare does not need a DBS, or to be a registered childminder, it is your responsibility to choose an appropriate person to provide childcare in line with safe-caring practice. These payments are to cover the cost of looking after a child/children in your care and not your own children.

If you chose to use a babysitter or your back-up carer financial arrangements are to be agreed between you – the Fostering Service will not be able to make these payments on your behalf.

19. Children at Residential School

Where children in foster care attend residential schools during weekdays or on a 38-week basis, Foster Carers still retain responsibility for providing their main home and will therefore incur expenses for the child such as clothes & toiletries, mobile phone, pocket money, home computer or laptop, school uniform and equipment, money for hobbies even when they are at school. It is recognised that Foster Carers will also attend consultations and events to support the child at school.

They will also have some fixed costs in relation to maintenance of the child's bedroom, annual insurance, wi-fi costs etc. However, they may not incur as much expense on other items such as food, laundry, utilities, day to day transport, etc while the child is overnight at school.

Carers looking after children in residential school, will receive their full allowance payments at their normal rate for the first half term (as stipulated by Surrey's School term dates; [School term dates - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/school-term-dates) to support the child to settle into their new school. Following this period, Foster Carers will receive 100% of allowances (Skill and age related) for any day or part of a day that the child is home; in the fostering household, and 70% of allowances (Skill and age related) for days when they are at school. Foster Carers are reminded that they can also claim mileage for all journeys to/from school in full if the school is outside catchment area.

20. Service Activity

Where the Fostering Service has asked Foster Carers to assist with Foster Carer recruitment and/or training activity, or a piece of specific service development, the equivalent of the National Minimum Wage (£12.71 from 1 April 2026) will be paid. Please note this is considered taxable income as it is not a direct fostering child-care activity and so Foster Carers will be required to complete the necessary forms to be paid on a sessional basis by Surrey County Council.

The Fostering Service will make it clear at time of any request whether the role is paid or considered part of regular Foster Carers participation/representation activity, which is voluntary.

21. Financial Support during an Investigation

Where there is an allegation or standards of care concern the 'Payment-of-fees-during-an-investigation' guidance held on Surrey Tri-X Procedure Manual should be referred to.

22. Retainers

In certain circumstances, the Fostering Service, Gateway Service and a child's social work team may want to ensure an identified foster carer remains available for a specific child for a period of time to support the child's care plan – this is usually to do with planned moves from other settings or when making pre court plans for children during care proceedings. To retain a home for a specific child a retainer payment will be made at the rate equivalent of a Specific Allowance per week per child.

Retainer payment will be requested in the following circumstances

- The Foster Carers is currently showing as available on the vacancy list.
- There is a court date set within 4 weeks.
- There is a plan of removal of a child at their birth within 2 weeks.

- The child/ren have a set date to transfer from an IFA foster care provider, move from residential care or hospital, or the plan is from an in-house short term foster carer to an in-house permanent carer.

Where a foster is currently on hold but agrees to care for a child at a later date when they were due to return to fostering, the start date of the retainer will be subject to negotiation based on the date when the carers status changed and the requirements re care planning.

22.1 Process:

For the payment to be agreed the following must be in place.

- The foster carers have made a commitment to the child/ren and agreed the retainer payment knowing that this may mean they are carrying a vacancy for the specific period in question.
- The child's Social Work team has accepted the foster placement following a discussion with the Foster Carers and the Supervising Social Worker.
- The Supervising Social Worker, allocated Gateway Resource Officer and the child's Social Worker have agreed that the match is suitable and viable taking into consideration the needs of the child/ren such as education, family time and health needs.
- The agreement is confirmed in a PNE prepared by the allocated Gateway Resource Officer which will note the name of the child, the date of the agreement being made, the purpose of the retainer and the date it is due to end.
- The Gateway Resource Officer will block the relevant number of beds on the Foster Carer's availability tab using the code UN5 with the relevant end date (no more than 4 weeks) added.

22.2 Extending:

If plans change and an extension to the retainer payment is required, i.e. the court date is delayed, the new date will be set within a 2-week period and agreed by the General Fostering Service Manager and in their absence the Head of Service Gateway, with agreement of the Foster Carer, and a new PNE will be issued.

22.3 Expectations:

During the time that a retention payment is in place.

The child's Social Worker will discuss the needs of the child with the Foster Carer and the Supervising Social Worker, visit the home if required – the child/ren may visit the home.

If the child/ren is moving to a permanent Foster Carer, planning meetings will be held, all paperwork will be shared with the Foster Carers and introductions between the Carers and child/ren will take place with additional daycare/overnight payments being made as necessary.

23. Staying Put

Where a young person remains with their former Foster Carer under a Staying Put arrangement, the equivalent of the 14-18 age-related fostering allowance is paid until the end of the academic year in which the young person turns 18 if they remain in education. After this period, or if the young person is not in education a Staying Put allowance will be made which is £293.84. The young person is expected to make a rent contribution of £70 per week, and a food contribution of £20 per week.

24. Supported Lodgings Payments

All Supported Lodgings Carers receive £293.84 per week support payment for each young person living with them.

In addition to this they will also receive £70 per week rent. If the young person is under 18 this is paid by the Fostering Service. If over 18 the young person will be responsible for paying this through employment or Universal Credit. If the young person does not have recourse to public funds, then the rent element will be paid by the Care Leavers Service.

A contribution to food is also negotiated between the carer and young person which is generally around £20 per week payable by the young person through employment, personal allowance or Universal Credit.

In summary therefore a carer receives a total of £363.84 per week plus contribution to food regardless of where the funding is coming from/how old the young person is.

It is acknowledged that Supported Lodgings is not a fostering arrangement and that carers are not assessed or supported under the same legal framework as Foster Carers. However, Carers are supported by the Fostering Service and so details of the payment scheme has been included in this document.

24.1 Young People's Personal Spending

The expectation in Supported Lodgings is that the young person is responsible for budgeting from their personal allowance, earnings or benefits and that support costs paid to the carer do not include an allowance for the young person. The young person is responsible for all their personal expenditure including food, clothes, toiletries, mobile phone, travel, hobbies and leisure.

- 16-18 year-olds receive an independent living allowance of £75.65 per week from the child's Social Work team.
- Those over 18 who claim Universal Credit receive £75.65 personal allowance per week within their benefit.
- Those over 18 who are not eligible for public funding or who cannot claim universal credit receive the personal allowance directly from the Care Leaving Service.

24.2 Specific Allowances in Supported Lodgings

The Specific Allowance of £130.49 per week is paid for the first eight weeks when a newly arrived asylum-seeking young person moves in with carers. This is to reflect the additional support and costs that may be incurred in this period, and that education for those over statutory school age is likely to take longer to arrange.

The Specific Allowance is also paid when a young person has a high level of need (in accordance with the criteria detailed on page 7- 8 above) or is stepping down from residential care or one-to-one foster care. It is also paid if the young person is still completing year 11 of their education in recognition of the extra support and expense this may incur.

25. Payment Processes

Payments to you are made in arrears, direct to your bank or building society.

Foster Carers should claim expenses online via the e-form or the Foster Carers Portal in consultation and agreement with their Supervising Social Worker. Receipts should be attached to claims. Not providing a receipt will result in the claim being rejected. Claims for daycare provided should not be made by Foster Carers as an expense, but by the Supervising Social Worker through the internal payment system.

Expenses and additional claims should be made as soon as possible, and at least once a month. Foster Carers must make claims for reimbursement of expenses within the same financial year that the expense was incurred, otherwise payments cannot be made.

Foster Carers will be expected to repay any overpayment of allowances. Although every effort is made to ensure no overpayments are made, overpayments do sometimes occur. It is the Foster Carer's responsibility to check each fortnightly statement and to notify their Supervising Social Worker, Team Manager and/or Finance if an overpayment has been made. If you have any queries about allowances or if you think you have been under or over paid, contact the finance team by email as soon as possible on childrensfinance.AandF@surreycc.gov.uk.