

DIFFERENT TYPES OF FOSTER CARE

Foster carers can carry out a number of different types of fostering tasks in recognition of this some carers receive fees and additional allowances. The amounts that are paid are published each year in March. Details are sent to all foster carers. They are also available on our County Council web site.

1. **Mainstream Foster Care**

The majority of foster carers are mainstream carers. They care for foster children of all ages from 0-17 years. Placements can last for a few days or many months. Mainstream carers receive a fostering allowance to pay for the day to day costs of the foster child.

Financial help is given for additional specified expenditure. The fostering social worker will give carers advice about what they can claim for.

Most mainstream carers choose to do particular types of mainstream care, but some carers do a mixture of different types of caring or change their fostering pattern as their families and circumstances change. Carers are normally approved for a particular category of caring but minor changes can be agreed at your annual review or after discussion with your fostering social worker. Significant changes to your registration category are usually referred to the Fostering Panel.

a) **Permanent Care**

This occurs when carers are willing to give a long-term commitment to a child for the rest of their childhood and hopefully beyond. Both the carers and the child have to be committed to this arrangement. For some reason adoption, a residence order or a special guardianship order are not appropriate

Usually a permanent placement is made following careful matching and introductions. Sometimes however children can be placed in an emergency or for time limited care, the foster family then decides that this child could be offered a permanent home with them. **Please discuss the idea with your fostering social worker before you let the child or young person know of your plans.** The Department may be very grateful for your offer, but there may be other factors, which mean that the child should move. If, for instance, there is a possibility the child can be placed for adoption or with a family member, this will generally be chosen over foster care. Your re-approval may need to go to the fostering panel.

Permanent carers are given additional levels of responsibility for the day to day care of the child. There is also a commitment, by both the department and the carers not to change the plans without a period of notice and without a discussion with the Permanency Panel.

(See also the section on Adoption as a lot of the same considerations also apply to permanent foster care).

b) **Care to Young Children Subject to Care Proceedings**

Care proceedings generally last 9-12 months, during which period the children will need a period of stability with one caring family. Most children who are subject to care proceedings are 'twin-tracked'. This means that an assessment to see if the children can return to their parents is carried out at the same time as plans are made for adoption or other types of permanent care. The possibility of a placement with relatives will also be considered. There will often be quite high levels of contact with the birth family as assessments are carried out to see if the children can return home. Carers may be asked to give evidence in court during the care proceedings. Carers are fully assisted and helped with this.

At the end of the proceedings some children will return home, others will be placed with their extended families, whilst some will be placed for adoption. Children who are placed for adoption go through short but intense periods of introductions to their prospective adopters.

Some carers offering time-limited placements decide to offer an adoptive home themselves. This should be carefully discussed with the fostering social worker, and if appropriate an internal planning meeting will be convened to decide whether it is right to commence an adoption assessment.

c) **Emergency Duty Carers**

The fostering team provides a rota to the Emergency Team of carers who are willing to be contacted during the evenings and weekends to take emergency placements. Children who are placed in this way are generally moved on the next working day. A fee is made if a placement is made and a weekly retainer is paid whilst the carer is on call

d) **Respite and Day Care**

Some families, who do not have a lot of family support and who have a number of other difficulties need periodic breaks from the care of their children. A regular break with a known carer can do a great deal to help families stay together.

At the same time the Department have recognised that some fostering situations are better supported if the foster carers can have a break from the care of their foster children. Sometimes the family members of the foster carers provide this break. Foster families who live close to each other also sometimes provide respite care. It is always best if a foster child can go to some one who is known to them.

Do discuss respite care with your fostering social worker.

Day care is provided in the same way and for the same reasons as respite care but it is sometimes also needed for young people who are not in full time education.

e) **Kinship Carers (Family and Friends Care)**

When social workers are considering removing a child from the care of its parents, they will always try to find out if there is a member of the extended family who is able to care for the child.

If the child is subject to care proceedings or is already subject to a Care Order, these relatives must become approved as foster carers. Sometimes the assessment as foster carers happens when the child is already in placement.

Kinship carers receive the same allowances and support as other carers but they do not progress onto the foster care 'schemes'.

2. Fee Paid Placements

a) **Experienced Carer's Allowance**

This payment is made to main stream carers but not to kinship carers. Carers become entitled to an experienced carer's allowance when they have been approved 18 months. Carers also have to have completed all their post approval training courses and be able to show that they are promoting the five outcomes. The allowance is paid per week, per child.

b) **Short Breaks Scheme_** (previously known as Family Link)

This is a specialist scheme to provide short breaks for disabled children. Many carers on this scheme already have experience of disability but some carers have no previous experience at all and are offered training and preparation.

Children and carers are carefully matched and there is usually a period of introductions before the child starts having overnight stays. Carers often remain linked to particular children for a number of years and a supportive relationship develops between the two families. Carers receive enhanced payments, which are paid in sessions. A session last up to six hours.

c). **Short Breaks Extra**

This scheme is also designed for children with disabilities but in recognition of the fact that some disabled children have extremely difficult behaviour that needs specialist handling we do pay enhanced levels of payments (levels 1-4) to carers willing to offer placements to these children.

d). **Special Care Placements**

This is especially for disabled children who need a long-term foster home. Carers who offer this type of care often move with their young people onto the Adult Placement Scheme. A fee is paid in addition to the fostering allowance, regular respite care is offered to these carers

e) **Remand Placements**

At any one time the department needs one or two carers who are able to offer placements to young people who are remanded to the care of the local authority. Some of the young people will be electronically 'tagged' or be subject to strict boundaries or curfew. There is a lot of joint work with the Youth Offending team.

f) **Task Centred Care**

Young people who start being looked after aged 11 and over tend to have complex needs, they often have an established relationship with their family. They cannot live with their family either in the short or long term but they are unlikely to want or need substitute parents. There will often be issues with education. In recognition of the tasks that carers have to do with these young people a fee is paid.

g). **Mother & Baby Placements**

These usually are needed for one of two reasons. The mother of the baby is a child herself who needs a period of help and support to settle her into the parenting role. Or the mother is being assessed as to her capabilities of caring for a child. At the end of the assessment, the baby might be removed from the mother's care and placed for adoption or the mother and baby will be helped to settle into their own accommodation

Foster carers are given help to enable them to assist in the assessment process.

h). **Professional Fees**

Some foster children have more needs than others some require the carers to carry out particular tasks in terms of behaviour management, school attendance, contact etc. In recognition of the more difficult tasks that can be asked of carers. Professional fees can be agreed at one of four levels. A professional fee may be agreed for a time limited piece of work or for a long term placement. Specific tasks are usually agreed as part of the fee payment.