



Children and Young People's Department

Guide to the Payment of Foster Carers

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27.3.15

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Amended: January 2015

Version: 6

Review Date: January 2016

Replaces: Guide to the Payment of Foster
Carers – June 2013

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Introduction

Wirral Council recognises the skills, experience and commitment of Foster Carers caring for children and young people in care.

Foster Carers provide an alternative family setting for children who cannot live with their parents or where their parents require additional support to look after their children. The financial cost of looking after fostered children is recognised in the form of an allowance paid. Recommendations for the minimum allowance paid by Local Authorities are set by Government. Fees are determined by each Fostering Service and are payments for expertise, training and experience which are over and above the skill needed for 'ordinary parenting' and are paid in recognition of the fact that fostering is complex and specialised work.

Foster Carers provide much more than an experience of family life. They operate within the Fostering Service working to prescribed standards and a regulatory framework. Foster Carers are at the centre of a multi-disciplinary team of professionals and are expected to take on a range of activities including ensuring that children have contact with their families, attending Court, record keeping and training. They are required to be trained in child development, attachment theory, the importance of play, improving educational outcomes, and the impact of trauma on development among other subjects.

This guide is for Foster Carers including Connected Carers and staff in the fostering service who administer payments and authorise payments. It is also relevant to Supervising Social Workers and staff involved in the supervision of children in placement.

Payments of allowances to Foster Carers are made through the Department's computerised payments system. In exceptional circumstances, to prevent hardship or to ensure that the child is not discriminated against in any way, emergency payments can be made. However, these would need to be agreed by the Team Manager of the Fostering Service or the Service Manager for Looked After children.

Wirral Fostering Service is responsible for ensuring that carers receive the correct payment in respect of children who are looked after and placed with Foster Carers. This guide outlines the nature and details of payments to be made to carers.

Please ensure that you read and understand this guidance. Advice on any aspect of these allowances is available from a supervising social worker.

Principles of Payment to Foster Carers

Payments to Foster Carers are divided into 2 categories as follows:

Fostering Allowances

These are remuneration and reimbursement payments. They are paid to cover the daily costs of caring for a child or young person and other payments made to cover specific costs they incur.

Fees

Fees are professional payments, paid to carers recognising their skills in caring for children and young people placed with them. This is based on the Foster Carer's registration.

Part One – Fostering Allowances

Standard Fostering Allowance

This is a weekly allowance paid for all children who are looked after in foster families, which varies according to the child's age.

The Fostering Allowance covers:

- General maintenance including food, accommodation and related costs
- Normal replacement of clothing
- Pocket money
- Attendance at review meetings etc.
- Involvement in clubs and activities
- Keeping a record of events and memories about the child for the child

Age related Fostering Allowances are based upon the Department for Education Fostering Allowances, subject to Wirral Cabinet approval. In addition there are payments made annually towards the cost of birthday and festivals.

See the [Department for Education Fostering Allowances](#)

There is an expectation that Foster Carers will encourage young people of an appropriate age to manage some of their own finances.

Allowances are paid fortnightly in arrears. Payments are made for the day of the child's arrival in placement and for the day of departure.

The Fostering Network has considered the various components of the weekly allowance. The table below shows how the weekly basic allowance breaks down under various component headings. Carers may find the information useful.

Table 1 Fostering Network Guidance

Age	Food	Clothing	Transport	Personal	Household	Total
0- 1	34%	22%	8%	6%	30%	100%
2- 4	34%	22%	8%	6%	30%	100%
5-10	32%	26%	7%	8%	27%	100%
11-15	32%	26%	11%	10%	21%	100%
16+	30%	26%	9%	17%	18%	100%

The Supervising Social Worker and the Child's Social Worker are to ensure that the Fostering Allowance is spent on the placed child in an appropriate manner which meets the child's needs. Foster Carers are expected to help children manage money and save. There is an expectation that each child has their own bank account.

Holiday Allowances

Each child living with Foster Carers is entitled to the payment of up to two weeks holiday allowance a year. This is the equivalent of two weeks Fostering Allowance. The holiday allowance would normally be authorised for payment in June, each year.

The holiday allowance is paid to allow carers to take a child on holiday or to be used for holiday activities. It is an expectation that Foster Carers will not take children out of school for a holiday. A foster carer must obtain permission from the head teacher to take a child out of school during term time.

The following steps must therefore be taken:

- an application is made to the head teacher in advance
- there are exceptional circumstances
- agreement is sought and given by the Senior Manager for Children in Care and also the child's parent if voluntary accommodated.

It is up to the head teacher in consultation with the Senior Manager for Children in Care to decide how many days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

School Organised Holidays and Trips

School organised holidays and trips are identified through the Personal Education Plan (PEP) for the child. The costs are applied for through the Personal Educational Allowance (PEA). On occasions the school may also be able to contribute to the cost. The Foster Carer should discuss these needs with the child's Social Worker.

Foster Carers are expected to meet the clothing/ equipment needs of the child for holidays and trips from the weekly allowance and/ or the annual holiday allowance.

Equipment

Newly approved Foster Carers are provided with 'setting up equipment' needed for the children that carers are registered for. This would include items such as a bed, combination wardrobe, car seat, cot, buggy, sterilizer, highchair and bedding. There is however a price limit on what the Local Authority will pay. Please speak to your Supervising Social Worker. Foster Carers can choose their own equipment up to the value agreed and request money in advance. Foster Carers must provide receipts once the items are purchased.

Replacement equipment can be requested if the Foster Carer does not receive a fee above Band 1.

Initial Clothing

An allowance of up to £200 can be paid for each child. Please note this amount is usually only paid once during each care career as the Fostering Allowance contains an element for clothing replacement, etc. The allowance paid must allow the carer to purchase sufficient and appropriate clothing for the child. Carers may choose to use the allowance initially in part, using the remainder at a later date.

Travel/ Mileage & Telephone Expenses

The basic Fostering Allowance includes an element for travelling costs which are part of the normal pattern of expenditure incurred in looking after foster children. Travel costs which arise from the need to meet those Children & Young People's Department requirements that are beyond the normal pattern of family expenditure can be claimed.

Examples of travel which the Foster Carer would be expected to absorb within the fostering allowance would include:

- Normal trips for medical appointments if local to the Foster Carer.
- Transport to and from school where the school is less than 1 mile from the foster home.
- Taking and collecting the child from social activities.

Examples of travel which the Department would expect to meet would include:

- Travel to and from school where the school is more than 1 mile from the foster home and where the child is not entitled to a school bus pass. Foster Carer's may claim the full cost of the journey in such circumstances.
- Transport to and from contact meetings.
- Attendance at reviews, case conferences and child protection meetings.
- The cost of travel to and from hospital and hospital parking charges where the child has a regular appointment with a hospital consultant or specialist
- Attendance at a training session provided by Wirral Fostering Service.

Where public transport is used, costs will be met in full. Car travel will be paid for at the rate of 38.7pence per mile, taking the shortest route possible. All travel expenses should be itemised and submitted using the appropriate Department form.

The cost of telephone calls will be covered by the payment of **£63** per annum per Foster Carer who has a child placed with them.

Carer's Leave (Delegated Authority)

Children need to feel part of the family who are looking after them as much as possible. At the same time, it is recognised that Foster Carers are looking after children every day of every week. It is important to consider what support can be given to enable Foster Carers to

take looked after children on holiday with them where this is possible and provide consistency of respite where it is not.

A Foster Carer (except where children are placed long-term) may take up to two weeks leave without the child(ren) they have placed with them, without loss of any fees. The fee rate will be based on the number of children in placement not the number of children the Foster Carer(s) are approved for or if no children currently placed, the number of children placed most recently.

If a carer takes leave of more than two weeks in the year without the child(ren) placed with them, the fees will not be paid for any period in excess of the two weeks.

Where carers take leave but have arranged under 'delegated authority' for a suitable third party to look after the foster children at the Foster Carers' home address the normal fee and allowance will be paid to the carer. It is the carers' responsibility to arrange appropriate financial support, for the suitable third party they have chosen, from the fee and allowance paid by the Department. This applies even if the third party is also an approved Foster Carer.

Where carers identify a suitable person for a child to stay overnight with for a short period of time, fees and allowances will be paid to the Foster Carer unless the suitable person is an approved Foster Carer, including Regulation 24 approval, then the suitable carer is paid the Foster Care Allowance and the main carer is paid the fee for up to two weeks, as part of the carers annual leave allowance.

Carer respite

This is where it is agreed that a child's needs require a level of respite other than when a Foster Carer chooses to take a holiday without a child they look after. These arrangements must be kept under careful review in terms of the impact of the respite arrangement on the child and whether there is a continuing need.

Fees will continue to be paid to carers whilst the child(ren) they care for are receiving respite care elsewhere if this is less than 3 days per week. Allowances would be payable pro rata for the days the child is with the carer.

In the case of Fostering Futures and Maintaining Futures Carers (i.e. those carers previously approved as therapeutic foster carers) no allowance will be paid.

Sitting

Foster Carers may claim for sitting costs to allow attendance at approved meetings and training events. Foster Carers should obtain agreement to fund sitting costs from the Wirral Fostering Service Team Manager. This rate of payment is linked to the adult minimum wage. If the sitter is an approved Wirral Foster Carer, the payment will be the age related allowance and carers fee for the day.

Hospital Stays

If a child has a hospital stay for any period of time whilst placed with carers, the fostering allowance and fee will continue to be paid in full. This is in recognition of the continued care and support given daily to the child in hospital by the carer. If for any unusual reason the daily support is not needed or given i.e. parents providing this, the fostering allowance will cease, and the fee will also cease at a time it is considered appropriate.

Training Support and Development Standards (TSDS)

Once the Foster Carers Training Support and Development Standards portfolio has been completed and signed off by the Fostering Service, the Foster Carer will be eligible to receive a £50 payment (per household) alongside their Training Support and Development Standards certificate.

Overpayments

If Foster Carer's continue to receive payments after a child has left their care, Foster Carers must contact their Supervising Social Worker or the Finance Officer immediately. When a child leaves a Foster Carer's care, payment of fees and allowances will end on that day. Overpayments will be dealt with in one of the following ways:

If the Foster Carer has other foster children, the overpayment will be deducted from future payments in respect of those children.

If the overpayment cannot be deducted from any payments the Foster Carer is currently receiving, Wirral Council will issue an invoice for the outstanding amount. Foster Carer's are advised to contact the Finance Department, if they are unable to pay the invoice in full, to arrange repayment by instalments. If the Foster Carer is made aware of the overpayment before it is received, then there is an expectation that the overpayment will be returned in full, immediately.

Part Two – Fees

Skills Based Scheme and Carer Banding

Fostering Network Report on Payments for Skills states:

"The provision of a flexible professional service requires that the Foster Carers, who are recruited must, after training, be able to demonstrate a range of basic skills which will meet the needs of children placed. However, Foster Carers, in common with all other child care professionals, will continue to develop and grow, learning new skills and developing expertise. This should be encouraged".

The Fostering Network also recommends that a scheme that allows carers to progress through levels, and on achieving each level, receive a higher rate of fee, as appropriate to meet the needs of the children Foster carers care for, or intend to care for.

Wirral Foster Carers are rewarded through the payment of a fee that recognises the skills, knowledge, and experience they have and are required to use. The carer demonstrates they meet all the fostering standards to a higher level. Carers will also be contributing to the development of the fostering service generally. This fee scheme allows carers to progress

through 3 levels, and on achieving each level, receive a higher rate of payment. Each level is referred to as a band.

Fees are paid fortnightly in arrears. Payments are made for the day of the child's arrival in placement and for the day of departure. The fees are paid in respect of the children placed, on the basis of the registration of the Foster Carer.

All Foster carers must complete an annual personal development plan, suitable for their band, agreed with their Supervising Social Worker.

It is the responsibility of the Wirral Fostering Service to ensure that children are matched and placed with the appropriately banded Foster Carer, within their registration, to meet the child's needs.

Where a child presents behaviour previously unknown to Wirral Fostering Service, which in the opinion of the service would normally require them to be placed with a higher banded Foster Carer and a move is not seen as in the best interests of the child, the Foster Carer review will be brought forward, and presented to Fostering Panel for consideration, for change of registration.

Band One

These carers include newly approved Foster Carers and all carers who through choice do not wish to progress through the bands. They will have completed pre-approval training, been assessed and approved via the Fostering Panel. They will also have agreed to and subsequently successfully completed the Training Support and Development Standards workbook and core training within one year of the initial approval.

Carers will receive:

The age related Fostering Allowance and payment of a skill fee of £55.23 per week per child placed.

Band Two

See section 'Progression through the bands'

Carers will be able to demonstrate they have the knowledge, experience and skills at an appropriate level, to enable them to meet the challenges, and needs of children they will be expected to care for.

If carers are already registered foster carers with another local authority or independent fostering agency, they may be able to evidence their skills, experience and knowledge, through completion of their induction training and TSDS portfolio completed in their first year of fostering. If fostering for longer than 12 months, they must demonstrate they have consistently developed their abilities as foster carers, through training and experience. Their portfolio will show how they meet all the fostering standards to a higher level including managed challenging situations, and contributed to the development of the service.

Carers asking to be considered for Band 2, may have started a fostering career at Band1 or may bring experience skills and knowledge from previous, relevant work.

This will also include those carers on the Short Term Break Scheme for children with disabilities who have substantial needs.

All carers registered as Band 2 are able to have children placed who need carers skilled at this level.

Carers will receive:

The age related Fostering Allowance and payment of a skill fee of £82.81 per week per child placed Band 2

Band Three

See also section 'Progression through the bands'

Band 3 Foster Carers can demonstrate they have the knowledge, experience and skills and will have substantial relevant experience, and training. They will have demonstrable ability to manage and meet the needs of children who present challenging behaviour. They will be assessed as having an ability to meet all the fostering standards to a very high level, and commitment to developing the service.

Carers asking to be considered for Band 3, may have started a fostering career at band 1 or 2, or may bring experience skills and knowledge from previous, relevant work.

Band 3 carers are expected to be available to care for a child at any time, i.e. any employment they may have would not prevent them from caring for a child when required to do so. Carers would be expected to contribute to the development of the service. It may be possible for carers to enter the structure at Band 3 if they are deemed capable and there is sufficient demand for Band 3 Carers.

Carers will receive:

The age related fostering allowance and payment of a skill fee of £138.04 per week per child placed.

If carers cease to be able to foster because of ill health, they will continue to receive their fee for up to 1 month after the date on which their last placement ended. Carers would be expected to provide self certification for the first 7 days of illness and, if necessary, a medical certificate from their GP for the further three weeks.

Children with Disabilities

The placing of children with disabilities with Foster Carers will be based on the four categories for eligibility for services (see eligibility criteria below).

All Foster Carers will be approached to care for children with low or moderate disabilities and will be provided with the appropriate support to do so. Children with substantial needs would normally be placed with Band 2 Carers and children with critical needs will usually be

cared for only by Foster Carers that have reached Band 3. Children with this high level of need will be in receipt of a substantial support package, often including a significant package of short break respite, specialist family support.

<u>Fair access to care services category</u>	<u>Threshold criteria</u>	<u>Services which may be being provided</u>
Critical	Child and family experiencing immediate and major difficulties which may be life threatening/ pose significant risks of injury	Social work support Joint-funded package of support Specialist psychology support Family support planned support package Residential short breaks / 35 days + / shared care Financial support with property modifications
Substantial	Child and family would experience significant pressures which may unless supported adequately result in need for long term provision	Social work support Low level joint-funded package of support Residential short breaks 14-35 days Home-based care – sitting provision Direct Payment Play scheme provision Occupational therapy assessment for adaptations and equipment
Moderate	Child and family experiencing difficulties which significantly impair their ability to lead an independent life.	Direct Payment – low level Signposting to voluntary organisations / parenting support Play scheme provision
Low	Child and family would benefit from support to enhance their quality of life.	Signposting to voluntary organisations

Disability Living Allowance

Children under the age of 16 years cannot claim Disability Living Allowance (DLA) themselves. Foster Carers are the most appropriate person to make a claim for a fostered child who is entitled to this benefit but is under 16 years old.

Foster Carers who are appointees for a fostered child receiving DLA have the responsibility to use the benefit appropriately to support the practical and emotional needs of the child. The use of the DLA will depend on the individual child's needs. The Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) expect the award to be used for extra support for the child and to save any surplus for the child to use in the future. This cannot be used for anything already paid for through Foster Care allowances. Foster Carers should open a separate bank account for the child if they do not already have one. Money in this bank account must go with the child if they move.

Carers need to consult the child, and the child's social worker about the use of DLA money. The misuse of DLA money is taken very seriously, and can be considered a criminal offence.

Progression through the Bands

Foster Carers may progress through the skills Bands to Band 2 or 3 as they acquire skills, knowledge and experience, and will be available to for children whose needs require the level of skill needed for the band. Any carer wishing to move bands should consult their Supervising Social Worker. Only one request in each financial year will normally be considered. The carer will be asked to provide a self assessment for the review, a 'Personal Development Portfolio (PDP)' to support their application and the Supervising Social worker will make a recommendation within the review in relation to their application.

The Foster Carer's Personal Development Plan and the Annual Review Report will be considered by the Fostering Panel for a recommendation. The recommendations from the review will be considered by the Agency Decision Maker.

The skills required to achieve each of the different band levels are described below. Those described for Band 1 are met by all approved Foster Carers, as it is against these criteria that Foster Carers are now assessed. The skills listed for Band 2 and 3 Foster Carers will be evidenced by providing simple examples of work they have already undertaken with children and their families and other associated evidence.

When considering progression through the Bands, the Department will take into account children's needs and also the sufficiency of existing placements to meet demand and any gaps in placement choice. This means that the number of carers eligible to progress from Band 1 to 2 and Band 2 to 3 is informed by the complexity of needs of the children requiring placement and also where there is a shortage of placements.

Band 1

Band 1 Foster Carers include newly approved carers and all carers who, through choice, do not wish to progress to a different band. They will have completed pre-approval training (if a couple fostering together both carers will have completed preparation training) and been assessed and approved via the Fostering Panel. The ability to meet the criteria for Band 1 will have been part of the assessment and will continue to be assessed at their annual

review. All carers are required to complete the Training Support and Development Standards for foster care work book within one year of approval. Band 1 carers who wish to remain on Band 1 will be required to show they continue to meet the required minimum standards set out below:

Caring for Children

1.01 An ability to provide a good standard of care to other people's children which promotes healthy emotional, physical and sexual development, promotes children's educational achievement and also promotes children's cultural/ethnic and identity needs
This includes:

- The ability to personally transport or otherwise ensure children get to where they need to be at all times without the use of departmental transport or local authority personnel. It is expected that only in exceptional circumstances will the use of departmental transport be required e.g. where foster children have been placed in the same home but need to be in different locations at the same time, or the carer has an unexpected emergency. The use of departmental transport will therefore be kept under close review with the expectation that, in the vast majority of cases, it will only be needed for a short period of time.
- The ability to ensure that children placed have full attendance at school, are not taken out of school for appointments/meetings that should be scheduled for outside school hours, and identify factors which inhibit full school attendance. Ensure children complete homework, children are read to, and given opportunities which promote educational achievement.
- The ability to contribute to, and complete tasks for, life history work with children – including providing photographs of important events whilst the children are placed.
- The ability to promote healthy lifestyles including promoting physical activity and healthy eating for the child. The ability to recognise and promote children's talents, skills and interests.
- The ability to identify the child's stage of development in relation to self care and independence skills To prepare children of all ages to develop their skills, relevant to their age and development. This may include early learning independence skills, managing money including opening a bank account for each child, preparing meals, negotiation skills etc.
- Provide electronic diary sheets of professional quality, ensuring the children's views are clearly represented. Diary Sheets must have the carers name clear at the top and full date, for each entry. The frequency diary sheets are to be provided will be agreed with the supervising social worker, and sent by email to supervising social worker, and the child social worker. These may be requested by courts. Carers should also complete and return expenses forms via email.

1.02 An ability to work closely with children's families and others who are important to the Child, building relationships and doing supervised contact when it is safe to do so.

1.03 An ability to set appropriate boundaries and manage children's behaviour within these, without the use of physical or other inappropriate punishment.

- 1.04 Knowledge of normal child development and an ability to listen to and communicate with children appropriate to their age and understanding.
- 1.05 Provide access to a computer and make arrangements to ensure that the child cannot access inappropriate material via the computer and is appropriately supervised.

Providing a Safe and Caring Environment

- 1.06 An ability to ensure that the children are cared for in a home where they are safe from harm or abuse.
- 1.07 An ability to help children keep themselves safe from harm or abuse, and to know how to seek help if their safety is threatened. This will include helping them keep themselves safe on the internet.
- 1.08 The ability to keep required records up to date for each child placed – including diary sheets, medical appointments, administration of medicine and treatment, Schedule 7 & 8 forms.

Working as Part of a Team

- 1.09 An ability to work with other professional people and contribute to the department's planning for the child/young person, including:
- The ability to be a key contributor to Personal Education Plans, Leisure Plans, Health Plans, Care Plans, Education, Health and Social Care Plans (EHCP).
 - The ability to complete tasks identified as the responsibility of the Foster Carers in all plans concerning the child, e.g. Personal Education Plans (PEPs), Leisure Plans, Health Plans and Care Plans.
- 1.10 An ability to communicate effectively, including electronically
- 1.11 An ability to keep information confidential
- 1.12 A commitment to promoting equality, diversity and the rights of individuals and groups within society.

Own Development

- 1.13 An ability to appreciate how personal experiences have affected themselves and their families, and the impact that fostering is likely to have on themselves and their wider family and friendship networks.
- 1.14 An ability to develop links within the community which provide support.
- 1.15 An ability to use training opportunities and to improve skills in fostering.
- 1.16 An ability to sustain positive relationships and maintain effective functioning through periods of stress.

- 1.17 The understanding of how to use a computer and use the internet in order to ensure that children are supported in using computer technology to complete homework and develop computer skills, whilst at the same time being sufficiently aware of how to keep children safe during these activities.
- 1.18 The ability to work with schools and other education staff to ensure that children who have difficulties in school, or who have not been attending regularly, can access education suitable for their needs.

Band 2

Carers wishing to move to this level of payment will can demonstrate their ability to complete all the necessary requirements for Band 1, to a high standard, and have developed knowledge, skills and experience to meet the requirements of Band 2. Carers will also be able to have children placed who are usually older when placed and present more challenging behaviours.

Existing carers will have completed an induction, core training, Training Support and Development Standards for foster care workbook and demonstrated their ability to offer skills at the appropriate level for Band 1 and Band 2.

All Band 2 Foster Carers must meet the requirements as set out in the Band 1 skills profile. In addition, they must be able to offer the following skills 2.01 to 2.12 and four of the remaining six (2.13 to 2.18).

All Required

- 2.01 An ability to help children develop appropriate social behaviour, helping them to become more independent, and build relationships, enabling them to cope with their emotions as appropriate to their age and ability.
- 2.02 An ability to assist children develop basic aspects of memory, thinking, imagination and manipulative skills through play etc. Being creative in offering opportunities to achieve these skills.
- 2.03 An ability to help children develop their language skills and general self-expression.
- 2.04 An ability to help children learn the boundaries of acceptable behaviour without resorting to physical punishment and within the limits of current policy, handle children's negative reactions, and unacceptable behaviour, and encourage positive behaviour patterns.
- 2.05 An ability to plan for and provide a varied and appropriate routine for children which balances the child's needs, including those of play and learning, and independence skills, and set goals which can be achieved by the child in order to enhance their development.
- 2.06 An ability to observe and respond appropriately to the possibility of child abuse and neglect.
- 2.07 An ability to observe and assess children and to clearly record these observations and

assessments on a regular basis.

- 2.08 An ability to challenge, appropriately, to ensure that foster care practice is anti-discriminatory and respects all children and their families, and advocate on behalf of children.
- 2.09 The ability to demonstrate an understanding of each child's aptitudes, talents and preferences, including where these have not previously been identified, and provide the necessary opportunities and support for each child to reach their potential in these areas. To identify any factors that may be inhibiting the development of their potential in these areas and seek to overcome them.
- 2.10 The ability to attend meetings about the child without their Supervising Social Worker and effectively communicate the children's needs in a positive and professional manner, and report back details reliably and accurately during supervision with their Supervising Social Worker.
- 2.11 The ability to work with the whole range of education staff including school-based staff to ensure the child accesses education in a way that can meet the child's needs, and ensure opportunities are provided to enhance the child reaches their potential.
- 2.12 The provision of a computer within the home that the foster child is able to access in order to develop their computer skills and complete homework as required by the school curriculum. Arrangements should be made to ensure that the child cannot access inappropriate material via the computer and is appropriately supervised.
- Four elements of the following (2.13 to 2.18) are also required:
- 2.13 An ability to help children and families cope with loss and bereavement – this may be because of life-threatening illnesses, separation through adoption, or loss of their family.
- 2.14 An ability to work closely with other professionals in carrying out individual therapeutic programmes, skills development, behaviour modification, or educational programmes with children.
- 2.15 An ability to work closely with other professionals, sharing information, exchanging skills, and working under the guidance or in collaboration with others involved with the child.
- 2.16 An ability to identify own training needs, complete at least 5 pieces of training or learning and demonstrate how this has been applied to practice.
- 2.17 An ability and willingness to assist at training events.
- 2.18 To be an active participant in the recruitment and or support of other carers eg as a Peer Mentor.

Band 3

Carers who wish to achieve Band 3 will be able to demonstrate their knowledge, Skills and experience of working with older children who present challenging behaviour. All Band 3 Foster Carers must meet be assessed as being able to meet the requirements as set out in the Band 1 and Band 2 skills profile, to a high standard. Band 3 carers will be available for older children (usually eleven years and above) with challenging behaviour to be placed.

Band 3 carers are expected to be available to care for a child at any time, i.e. any employment they may have would not prevent them from caring for a child when required to do so. Carers are expected to contribute to the development of the service and other carers.

Whilst carers are expected to take children within their approval range, they may refuse inappropriate placements. A carer review will be completed if a Band 3 carer refuses to take a placement which was regarded by the Fostering Service as appropriate.

All Band 3 Foster Carers must meet the requirements as set out in Bands 1 and 2 skill profiles. In addition they should be able to offer the following, of which criteria 3.01 to 3.07 are core, four of the remaining six (3.08 to 3.13) must also be demonstrated.

All of the following are Required for Band 3:

- 3.01 Have proven relevant child care experience which would include fostering, or employment in working with children.
- 3.02 Be able to accept and manage children/ young people assessed as presenting behaviour which causes serious management problems.
- 3.03 Maintain an awareness and knowledge of current legislation and current issues in child care and good practice.
- 3.04 An ability to take responsibility for individual programmes of skills development for children, and work with them and their parents and other professionals to achieve the goals of the programmes.
- 3.05 The ability to undertake the role of an 'Appropriate Adult' (as defined by The Police and Criminal Evidence Act) when a child has been arrested, and is being questioned under caution at a police station – training is provided for this.
- 3.06 The ability to care for children with complex needs that meet the substantial and/or critical criteria for support from the Children with Disabilities service. This will include liaison with all relevant services and agencies that are contributing to meeting the child's needs e.g. health, education, social care to ensure all aspects of the care package are functioning together well.
- 3.07 Will, with the supervising social worker and or child's social worker identify skills the young person has to become independent, and the skills the young person needs to develop to become independent. Then develop a programme of preparation for adult life, with the child, which will include self care skills, including sexual health and relationships. Also money management, including opening and managing a bank account. Cooking and meal preparation. Preparing for employment, negotiating with others, and asking for advice.

Four elements of 3.08 to 3.13 are also required for Band 3:

3.08 Be able, in conjunction with the agency, to take a key role in training other carers.

3.09 Be able to offer support to carers on a formal basis e.g. mentoring

3.10 Have the ability and willingness to take part in intensive therapeutic work with children with appropriate supervision and consultation.

3.11 Be able, where requested and planned, to work with children and families to avoid removal of children from their home environment.

3.12 Have the ability and willingness to supervise contact visits, where it is not deemed safe or desirable for contact to occur without a third party, and where it cannot happen in the foster home.

3.13 Take responsibility for seeking out training appropriate for own needs.

There is no expectation that carers would undertake all these tasks at the same time. They will, however, have to demonstrate their ability to undertake them and be available and willing to do so depending upon the demands of placements. This approach does allow some carers to move to a supportive, training role in relation to other carers, whilst some will choose to develop their child care skills.

Evidence Requirements

Foster Carers should start compiling a portfolio of evidence. The evidence will assist the Annual Review Process for each Foster Carer. If a carer applies to progress to a higher Band, this portfolio of evidence, alongside the annual review documentation will be considered by fostering Panel.

The types of evidence that would be useful are as follows:

- Certificates of qualifications
- Attendance at training and other events with supportive certification
- Letters from and to professionals
- School reports
- Evidence of the carers' contribution to plans and programmes for children
- Feedback from children
- Feedback from birth parents

Personal Development Plan.

All foster carers must have a Personal Development Plan (PDP), usually developed annually around the time of a carers annual review. The PDP will be discussed at supervision with the supervising social worker. The PDP identifies training / learning carers will complete. In order to maintain their registration, all Foster Carers are required to complete core training in the following areas within one year of approval:

- First Aid

- Safeguarding
- Recording
- Diversity
- Managing Behaviour
- Internet Safety
- Training Support and Development Standards Foster Carer Workbook.

After the first year and each subsequent year, Foster Carers must complete at least five days training, or learning opportunities, demonstrate how that learning has been applied to fostering practice. This must include at least one session of joint training with other professionals. Foster Carers can do all 5 days attending training or discuss with their Supervising social worker learning opportunities that can fulfil this training / learning requirement.

A Foster Carer who does not fulfil the training / learning requirements could lose part or all of their Band fee. The Supervising Social Worker will identify at an early stage through supervision if there is any risk of the Foster Carer not completing the required training, which will result in removal from a band. If necessary an action plan will be agreed with the Foster Carer, supported by the Supervising Social Worker.

If a Foster Carer refuses to undertake this training required for their band within the agreed timescale, a review will be carried out in order for an opinion to be formed by the Fostering Panel. A report should be submitted with a recommendation for the removal of the fee from the Foster Carer. It should include the conditions under which it can be reinstated for consideration by the Agency Decision Maker, who will decide if the Foster Carer should be removed from the band.

If a Foster Carer is removed from a band the Fostering Service will support the carer to meet his/her training needs within the agreed timescales in order for the fee to be reinstated.

Please also see removal from a band below.

If a Foster Carer disagrees with the decision, they can put their reasons for their disagreement in writing to the Team Manager, Wirral Fostering Services, within 28 days of receipt of the letter confirming removal from the band.

All appeals against the decision for removal of a fee and move to a lower band will be considered first by the Fostering Panel. The Agency Decision Maker will make the final decision after considering the recommendation by the Panel.

Removal from a Band

Voluntary Removal from a Band

Each Foster Carer has an annual review, which is the carers opportunity to show how well they are doing and in particular how they are fulfilling the following:

- 1.They are meeting all the fostering standards
- 2.They are fulfilling all the requirements of Band 1
- 3.If they are seeking or receiving Band 2 payments, they are fulfilling all the requirements of Band 1 & Band 2

4.If they are seeking or receiving Band 3 they are fulfilling Band1 , Band 2 & Band 3 requirements.

Foster carers may ask to be moved to a lower Band at any point during their career, if they feel that they are unable to fulfil the duties required of them on their present Band.

Enforced Removal from a Band

If foster carers are not fulfilling the above, the supervising social worker and carers will discuss any shortfall of the above, during the review period, or whilst preparing the review, an action plan will be developed with the carer to plan how any shortfall can be improved, what actions need to be taken and by when, the plan can cover no more than 6 months.

The review and action plan will then be presented to the reviewing officer, or fostering Panel, depending where the review is due to be heard. The Fostering Service will make a recommendation to the Reviewing officer or Panel

As follows either

- 1.Carers should remain on the Band they are receiving, whilst completing the action Plan, review at the end of the Action Plan. (This will be no more than 6 months, if the action plan is to continue then 2 below applies.)
- 2.Carers to be removed from their present Band until the carers are able to demonstrate at review they are fulfilling the requirements of that Band. There will be a recommendation of the Band they will be paid i.e. the Band the review can evidence as being met.

The Reviewing Officer or Panel will consider the recommendation, and form their own view of what they will recommend to the Agency Decision Maker, who makes the determination of the terms of the carers registration including the Band to be paid.

Foster Carers who are returned to panel and have their registration withdrawn will automatically cease to receive a fee.

Allegations against Carers

If a foster carer becomes the subject of allegations that leads to a child being removed from their care, pending the outcome of an investigation, they will still be able to receive their fee but the allowance for the child will cease for as long as the child is not with them. Fees will be ended if the foster carer resigns or returns to Fostering Panel and deregistration is recommended.

Part Three – Replacement of Previous Schemes

This section deals with the method that will be adopted in ending previous schemes and arrangements following the implementation of parts one and two of this guide.

Teenage Fostering Scheme

Recruitment to the Teenage Fee Scheme has now ceased with the implementation of the Band 3 Scheme. Band 3 now includes children who are 11 plus when placed.

Teenage Foster Carers will be subject to review as are all Foster Carers. If, in the opinion of the Reviewing Officer, a Teenage Foster Carer fails to meet the required standards a report outlining the reasons for this opinion should be submitted for consideration by the panel, with a recommendation of which band is the most appropriate during the next review period, or with a recommendation to deregister as a Foster Carer.

Once carers have left the Teenage Fostering Scheme, due to the closure of this scheme, they will not return to the Teenage Fostering Scheme. Should they return to fostering it would be at the relevant band.

Fostering Futures and Maintaining Futures Schemes

These schemes are currently being phased out and no new carers will be recruited to the schemes. As children leave their placements it is hoped that at review, carers will change their registration to one of the other schemes and skills bands.