

SMBC Fostering Service:

Appendix C

Financial support to Foster Carers 2021/22 with effect 10th April 2023

Child allowance

Child allowance is payable to all Solihull foster carers to cover the costs of providing a home to a child. The allowance is age-related. This allowance includes provision for clothing, normal wear and tear, savings for children, activities (clubs etc.), school trips and some foster carer mileage costs. See guidance information on this for more details about recommended breakdown of the allowance.

	£ per week	Made up of:	
Age Range	Child Allowance	Payment direct to Carer	Long Term LAC Savings Needs*
0 to 4 year olds	£170.53	£164.58	£5.95
5 to 10 year olds	£194.23	£188.28	£5.95
11 to 15 year olds	£241.81	£235.86	£5.95
16 to 18 year olds	£294.15	£288.20	£5.95

* Solihull MBC pays this element of the Child Allowance directly into the child specific Child Trust Fund or Junior ISA accounts for any Children Looked After in care for 12 month or more.

Birthday and Festival Allowance

This is payable to each foster carer for each child in placement to cover the additional costs of birthday and one annual festival. Each is equivalent to 1 week of the age related child allowance.

The allowances are expected to be used as in normal family arrangements. For instance, they may be saved and added to by a child from their own savings to purchase ICT equipment (for learning and for leisure). For older children in care, they may be used to purchase items to support a move to independent living or for driving lessons for example.

Holiday Allowance

This is payable to all foster carers and is the equivalent of 2 weeks of the age related child allowance.

It is expected this would be used to cover the costs of school holidays and the additional costs to a foster family of a family holiday for the child/children in placement.

Up to twice in a child's school career, and with the agreement of the child's Social Work Team Manager, the local authority can contribute to meeting reasonable holiday costs (family or school) where this is clearly in the interests of the child and where the costs exceed £500.

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Holding fee/retainer

Subject to agreement by the child's team manager, this will be payable to carers when a child matched with them is awaiting court decision/hospital discharge etc. before they can be placed. The fee will be the equivalent of the under 11 carer fee (if eligible) plus skills payment, regardless of the age of the child to be placed.

Carers subject to allegations

Occasionally, foster carers are the subject of allegations, and in some cases because of these, they will not have any foster children placed with them while the allegations are being investigated. In these circumstances, and until the outcome of the investigation, the carer will receive the under 11 Carer Fee (regardless of the age of the child previously fostered) if previously in receipt of a Carer Fee. This is made per child in placement at the time of the allegation. Payments to part-time carers under this provision will be on pro-rata basis equivalent to those agreed for the children in placement at the time of the allegation. Investigations will be completed as quickly as is possible. Foster carers will be required to assist with the enquiries. Payments will be reviewed after four weeks, and on an on-going basis.

Blocked bed

When the needs of a child are to be in a solo placement (with no other children), and the best match is with a carer who is approved for two children, a blocked bed fee equivalent to the under 11 carer fee is payable subject to the agreement of the child's team manager. This will be subject to 3 monthly reviews.

Foster care fees and allowances for part-time arrangements

Fees and allowances will be paid on a pro-rata basis. The fees and allowances payable will be agreed by the Head of Service on a case-by-case basis and in line with the agreed fee and allowance scheme.

Travel and mileage costs

Travel and mileage costs incurred by the foster carer that exceed the level included in the weekly child allowance 60 miles will be reimbursed by the child's social work team to cover agreed additional costs. The mileage rate payable is the same as the protected casual user rate for employees of SMBC (36p per mile in 2023/24).

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Loss or damage of property incurred by fostered child

Foster carers are expected to have appropriate insurances for their property, including contents insurance for their own personal possessions and for the property of the child they are caring for and to cover accidental damage. It is also a requirement that foster carers advise their home, contents and car insurance companies that they are fostering. The local authority will not be held liable if carers fail to notify their insurers and this causes a failed claim. These expectations are included in the Foster Care Agreement signed annually by the foster carer.

Routine wear and tear is included in the child allowance. If a foster carer's home is damaged or a carer suffers loss because of fostering which is not covered by insurance, in some cases compensation may be available through Solihull MBC. Foster carers should discuss this with their fostering social worker. Approval is at the discretion of the Head of Service. See the fostering handbook and Fostering Network site for more information.

Initial clothing allowance

If a child is placed in an emergency with insufficient clothing, and with the agreement of the placing social workers, foster carers will be reimbursed for initial clothing required up to £250 covered by receipts.

Initial school clothing allowance

Reasonable costs of school clothing will be paid / reimbursed to the foster carers where this is needed due to unplanned change of school and agreed with the child's social worker, and when covered by receipts.

Equipment and furniture

Please discuss with your fostering social worker if you require extra equipment or furniture when you start fostering, or to meet the needs of a specific child (e.g. pushchair).

If equipment is provided or funded by the fostering service, it should be returned when it is no longer needed. Equipment will be expected to be in a reasonable condition reflective of its age and usage.

Tax, pensions and Social Security Benefits

Please see Solihull Fostering Handbook and Fostering Networks signpost booklets for further information.