

Consultation Fostering fees and allowances

Why are we reviewing the fostering fees and allowances?

Our current fees and allowances system is old-fashioned, inconsistent and unfair.

It has changed over many years to address specific issues but as a result has become confusing and inequitable.

We need to increase the number of our in-house fostering carers to reduce the amount of money spent in the independent sector.

Currently Fostering Devon has:

- 5 different payment schemes
- 3 tier progression schemes
- 4 different age bands

The current fees and allowances system:

- creates inequalities
- rewards the top end carers well, but isn't competitive at entry level
- creates unnecessarily complex administration
- is a block to recruitment

Fostering Devon's current position:

- 270 fostering households in Devon (we need more)
- circa 700 children in care
- approx. half are placed with in-house foster care
- 2017/18 spend on in-house foster care allowances: £8,305,620

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How has this new model been created?

We have used a process called CO-PRODUCTION which:

- involves people working together in equal partnership
- engages at the earliest stages of service design, development and evaluation
- acknowledges that people with 'lived experience' are often best placed to advise on what will make a positive difference
- aims to create a level playing field where everyone involved, including foster carers from each existing scheme, have a voice, value each other and learn together from the start of the process

We worked with a sample group of Devon foster carers throughout the process to co-produce a fee model for consultation. This group is called the Working Party and consisted:

Family & Friends Carers • Tier 3 carers • Tier 2 carers • Tier 1 carers • Devon Young People's Accommodation Service • Children and Parent Assessment Service • Fostering Managers • Fostering Social Workers • Devon Foster Carers' Association Members • Independent Workers Union of Great Britain Member.

"... it was good to feel like we were part of the team and definitely felt like all views were listened to, whilst knowing that not everyone can have everything that they want (since we don't live in an ideal world!)" **Tier 2 Foster Carer**

"The breakout groups enabled everyone to voice their opinions and shape individual models"
Tier 3 Foster Carer



"I thought it was very positive and enjoyed the participation in it. More importantly I feel we all had a say with our opinions" **Tier 2 Foster Carer**

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The governing principles

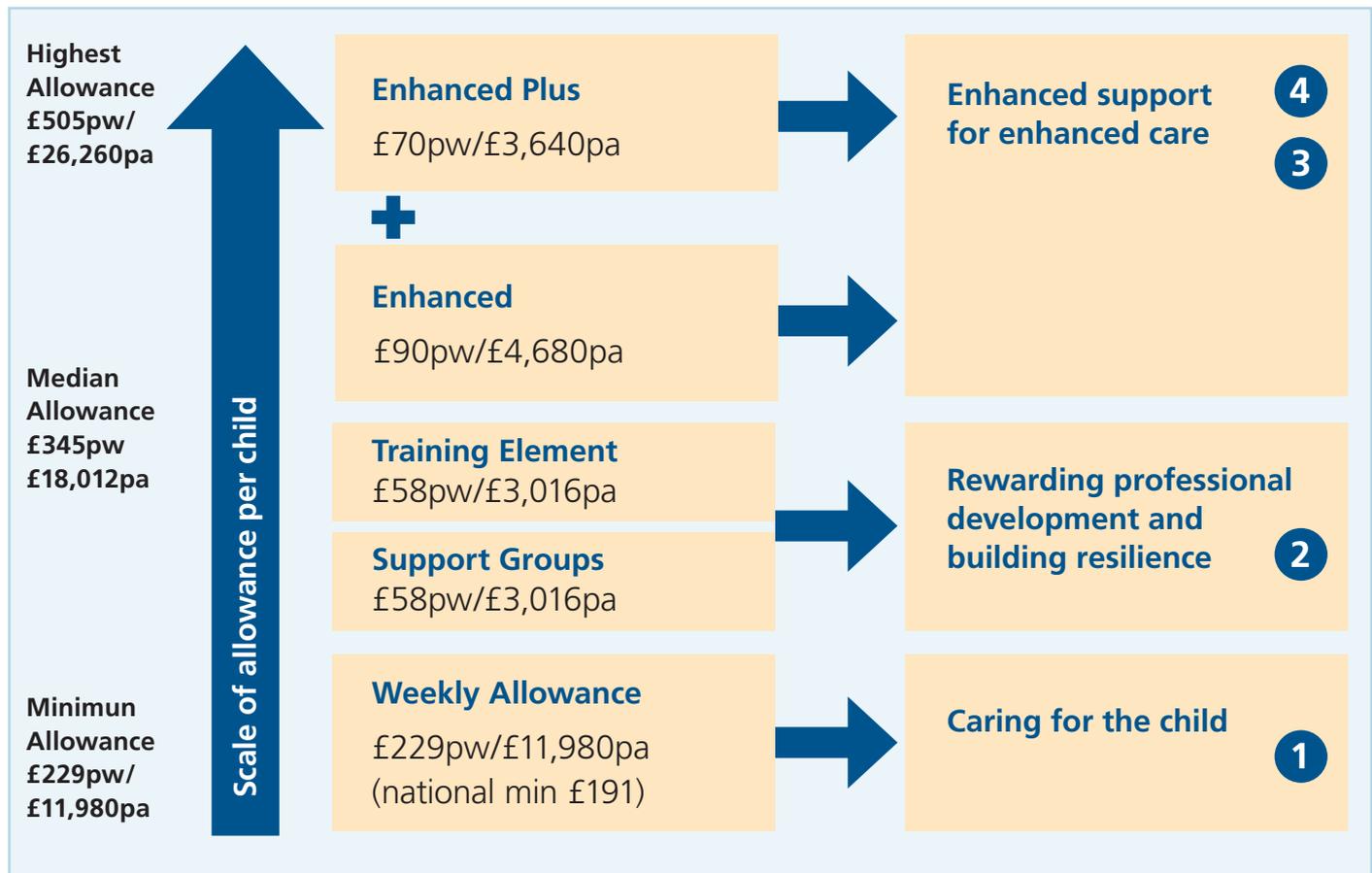
The governing principles as agreed by the working party mean that the new model:

- ✓ RECOGNISES THE INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT NEEDS OF THE CHILD
- ✓ IS EQUITABLE AND FAIR
- ✓ GIVES REWARD & RECOGNITION FOR THE ONGOING TRAINING AND RESILIENCE OF THE CARER
- ✓ IS AFFORDABLE
- ✓ RECOGNISES THAT SUPPORT FROM DCC CONTINUES TO BE VALUED
- ✓ HAS A FAIR ASSESSMENT PROCESS
- ✓ IS SIMPLE. BRINGS TOGETHER ALL ALLOWANCES
- ✓ IS COMPETITIVE WITH INDEPENDENT FOSTERING AGENCIES
- ✓ HAS CLEAR EXPECTATIONS FOR CARERS
- ✓ HAS THE FLEXIBILITY TO REWARD FOR THE WORK DONE
- ✓ IS TRANSPARENT AND UNDERSTANDABLE

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The Model

Following several months of work by the Working Party and the Project Group, the following model was agreed for consultation.



How was the new model chosen?

- in October 2017 the Working Party drafted five potential models
- these were costed and scrutinised to ensure fit with the governing principles by the Project Team
- the preferred model was selected for detailed analysis
- the preferred model was then applied to each fostering household to establish the financial implications

Who are the Project Team?

- A Tier 3 Foster Carer
- Finance Officers
- Project Manager
- Fostering Operational Manager
- Communications Officers
- County Solicitor
- Business Support Manager
- Care First / IT

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The Model

1

The weekly allowance is allocated to cover the basic expenses of caring for a child. The national **minimum rate is £191.00**. The proposed new model **exceeds this minimum. All carers will receive this payment.**

2

This will give **reward and recognition for carers'** who are committed to personal development and building resilience. If a carer attends **6 training events** in a year then this will be **recognised and rewarded**. If a carer attends **6 support groups** then this will be **recognised and rewarded too**.

This will **encourage personal development** and **promote participation in support groups** where experience, fresh ideas and mutual support can be shared.

3

The top principle agreed by the Working Party was that the support **needs of children should be recognised**. The Project Team explored how this could be assessed and identified a process tried and tested by Plymouth City Council.

This element enables **enhanced support** and **recognition** for those carers caring for **children with enhanced needs**.

An **Enhanced Plus** element has been included to recognise the challenges of caring for the **most traumatised children**.

4

What happens if a child settles down - will the Enhanced payment be removed?

The level of reward will **remain the same for the duration of the placement**. The aim of this model is to give **reward and recognition** for **successful care giving**. The Enhanced element will **not be removed** if the child settles down.

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Assessment criteria for the Enhanced and Enhanced Plus payments. Have we missed any issues of complexity?

NEED CATEGORY	LEVEL OF NEED
1. Solo placement	
	Requires solo placement only
2. Risk	
	Risk to younger children
	Risk to animals
3. Legal status	
a)	Care Order
b)	Interim Care Order/EPO/PPO
c)	Accommodated
4. Number of previous placements	
a)	0
b)	1-3
c)	4+
5. Age	
a)	0-10
b)	11- 18
6. Time in Care	
a)	One year or under
b)	1-4 years
c)	5 years an up
7. Previous types of placements	
a)	From home/hospital
b)	Foster care/connected carer/Family
c)	Residential
d)	Secure
e)	Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker (UAS)
8. Missing from home /care episodes?	
a)	None
b)	1-3
c)	4+
9. Education	
a)	Pre-School
b)	Full time education /FE college
c)	Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
d)	Special School
e)	Occasional non attendance
f)	Pupil Referral Unit / home tuition
g)	Frequent non attendance
h)	Temporary Exclusions
i)	Permanent exclusions
j)	No education

NEED CATEGORY	LEVEL OF NEED
10. Experience of abuse and neglect	
a)	Emotional abuse
b)	Neglect
c)	Sexual abuse
d)	Physical abuse
e)	Domestic Violence in home
f)	Displaced due to UAS status
g)	Young Persons Behaviour only
11. Health	
a)	No specific health needs mentioned
b)	Diagnosed mental health difficulties
c)	CAMHS involvement
d)	Learning disability/communication difficulties
e)	Physical disability/sensory
f)	Other diagnosed difficulties/inc global developmental delay
g)	Chronic health problems
h)	Diagnosis resulting in 24/7 health care (inc night care)
12. Substance Misuse	
a)	Substance misuse not mentioned as risk
b)	Low Level actual or potential risk
c)	Occasional and/or at medium risk
d)	Frequent and/or at high risk
e)	Other agency involvement
13. Level of need / risk	
a)	Can live as part of a fostering family. Not a high risk to others, less behavioural issues
b)	Able to form secure attachments reflected in learning and behaviour
c)	Some attachment issues mentioned
d)	Significant learning and/or behavioural difficulties
e)	Significant attachment issue that have a major impact on child development
f)	Autistic spectrum disorder leading to complex additional needs
g)	Emotional and behavioural difficulties
h)	YOTS involvement
i)	Severe emotional and behavioural difficulties
j)	Challenging or offending behaviours. Threats of violence and aggression towards care givers
k)	Extremely challenging or offending behaviour. Actual violence and aggression towards care givers/foster carers
l)	Sexualised behaviour and sexually harmful behaviour
m)	Risk of child sexual exploitation
n)	Language Barrier (no English)
o)	Self Harm – superficial
p)	Self Harm – serious concerns (not substance misuse)
q)	Risk of fire setting. One or more events of fire setting inside a home

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How does this new model compare with other local authorities?

It compares well and will give Fostering Devon the competitive edge we need to recruit more in-house carers and decrease our use of independent and residential carers.

Devon County Council
£229 - £505

Plymouth City Council
£243 - £472

Cornwall County Council
£178 - £356

How does this new model compare with the Independent Fostering Agencies?

We reviewed the fees and allowances paid by 13 of the IFA's used locally. On average the standard weekly rate is £417 and the average weekly higher rate is £440.

Will I be protected if my fees reduce?

It is proposed that there will be a protection arrangement for two years in most cases.

If the decrease to your weekly allowance is less than 5% there is no protection. If the decrease to your weekly allowance is more than 5% then you will be protected for two years or until the placement ends, whichever is sooner.

What is the impact of the proposed new model on the wider Fostering Devon budget?

This is not a cost saving exercise.

The proposed new model will require an initial additional £1m investment in the Fostering Service. This figure includes any increase in the ongoing fees and the protection arrangements.

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What about the other areas of support offered to Fostering Devon carers?

We are very pleased to say that the excellent support services you currently receive will be maintained under the proposed new model, these include:

- Good Social Worker to Foster Carer ratio.
- Placement Support Team.
- Therapeutic Parenting support.
- Dedicated Out of Hours Support.
- Fun programme of events including Activities / Pantomime / Gala Dinner.
- Comprehensive Training Program.
- Online Training.
- Peer Mentoring Scheme.
- Devon Foster Carer Association.
- FosterTalk Membership
- Carer Participation.



*"I used to foster with an independent agency but I now foster with Fostering Devon because I think the support they give you is superb. They are always on the end of the phone and the team is just brilliant." **Lisa, Foster Carer***



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Frequently Asked Questions

Will payment for support groups & training include those providing the training?

Yes, if carers contribute to the training & support groups that would be included.

Will training/support attendance be paid per child?

Yes.

Will online training be included in these payments?

Yes.

How will attendance be monitored for the training & support groups?

There will be an annual review of all carers attendance.

On occasions when training or support groups cannot be attended for valid reasons, for example sickness or emergency arrangements, these will be counted if required.

Are there enough courses available if all carers are required to complete 6 per year?

There are many occasions currently when training courses are under subscribed. Training can also include attendance at conferences, workshops and online training as agreed with the supervising social worker.

Which additional costs are included in the new fees?

The Working Party asked for holidays, birthdays and Christmas to be included. Respite, mileage and incidental costs are not included.

Will the Fostering Emergency Placement Scheme continue?

No, however carers will continue to be entitled to a disturbance allowance.

Is Child & Parent service included in the new model?

No, it is still separate and has been reviewed separately.

How will carers be supported if their fees reduce?

The model has been 'stress tested' to see what the implications are for carers (as at March 2018). Individual circumstances and placements may have since changed and the financial implications may be different at the time of 'go live'.

Any proposed changes will not happen immediately, there will be a three-month notice period. This is in addition to the two-year protection arrangement.

Does 'Solo Placement' account for circumstances such as a carer only having room for one child?

No. A solo placement means the child is too complex, or presents too high a risk for any other children to share that placement.

Will bed blocks still be paid an additional fee?

Yes

Will carers' fees change if the child's behaviour improves/their needs lessen?

No, the carer will remain on the same allowance for the placement duration.

Will current placements be assessed based on the needs of the child now or when they first came into care?

Children will be assessed based on their behaviour when they first started their current placement.

Can we add to the Needs Criteria forms?

Yes, additional criteria will be considered. Suggestions so far have included: complex contact arrangements; high levels of supervision; night time disturbance; caring for the terminally ill.

Is DYPAS and UASC included in the new model?

Yes.

Do IFAs include mileage in their fees?

Yes. IFAs expect carers to cover the first 100 miles per week.

Why is the protection scheme for the placement and not the carer?

The scheme is designed to recognise the work the carer is currently doing and their commitment to self-development and support.

What if carers say no to low need children because they cannot afford that pay/they would prefer to wait for a complex child for the additional pay?

Carers have a choice to wait for a child with enhanced support needs. Carers will not be paid an enhanced fee for a child who does not have that level of identified need.

Please speak to a member of the team if you have any further questions.

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What you think?

- Add your comments to our Post-It Wall below
- Place your comment in the box today
- Email your feedback to:
childsc.fosteringregisteredmanager-mailbox@devon.gov.uk

What happens next?

All feedback gathered at our events will be collated and considered with a presentation being made to Devon County Council's Children's Scrutiny Committee on **17 September** followed by Cabinet for a final decision on the **10 October**. The hope is to implement the changes from **1 November 2018**.